THE DEATH OF YESTERDAY

ALL MR. STEPHEN GRAHAM'S LITERARY ESSAYS IN A SMALL OMNIBUS VOLUME

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By

STEPHEN GRAHAM

All Stephen Graham's Literary Essays in a small omnibus

Mr. Graham's first book was published in 1910 and since that time he has written some twenty-five books. A number of essays written mostly for personal pleasure during the last twenty-five years have not found place in his books. They are collected here for the first time.

These essays on Chesterton, Kipling, Jack London, Cunninghame Graham, Herghesheimer, Gorky, Petrarch, Solovyof, etc. are the fruit of a selective study of literature and show what a living writer rejects or assimilates in books. Here are the opinions and literary judgments of a man of travel.

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THE DEATH OF YESTERDAY

by

Stephen Graham

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FOREWORD

In the course of twenty years of active authorship I have written a number of literary essays. I have gathered these together, and here they all are in a small omnibus.

I have mostly been attracted by those authors whose work reflected life in the raw. Hence the studies I made of Jack London and Cunninghame Graham, after reading all their stories. Conrad and O'Neill interested me similarly, as did Herghesheimer, though he is more derivative. Among modern poets I have liked Lindsay and Sandburg most, and of all the modern Russians I prefer the young Maxim Gorky, before he spoiled himself with propaganda. I am also an admirer of the work of Don Marquis, A. P. Herbert, G. K. Chesterton, and the late William Caine. Some stray leaves have found their way into a book, and of these the essays on Petrarch and Laura, and on Swinburne's "Island" seemed to belong to this collection, though not necessarily relevant to the title.

The first essay and that on Jack London appeared originally in the *English Review*, that on Petrarch and Laura in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, that on America as Material for Literature in the *Contemporary*, and on Vladimir Solovyof in the *Quest*. The essay on Robert Burns appeared originally in *John o' London's Weekly*. To the editors of these journals I desire to render acknowledgment and thanks.

STEPHEN GRAHAM.

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I

Yesterday's Books

'MUST I always be listening and never reply?' cried Juvenal. 'Must the voice of the hoarse poet Codrus sound forever in mine ears?' Rest, perturbed spirit! Codrus is in his grave; after life's fitful fever he sleeps well. Juvenal remains a classic text and Codrus (who was Codrus?) has to be explained briefly in a footnote. 'The market is full of noisy clowns,' said Nietzsche, 'they are for the people, the gentlemen of an hour.' The hour passes and Codrus is silent. Other Codruses arise, but also they pass. There is a great deal of comfort in the fact.

When Meredith died what a clamour there was—should he or should he not be buried in Westminster Abbey? The Dean of those days, being no Meredithian, said flatly 'No' and believed that his decision would be justified. The Codruses, however, made loud complaint. Hall Caine, then on his way to knighthood, came forward to champion the honour of his friend. But the Abbey has its dust of forgotten worthies and you ask, not once nor twice, as you walk the dim aisles and look at some forgotten grave—'Who was that? Whoever reads a word of anything that that man wrote?' The Abbey has no magic power to make its dry bones live or save a dull man from oblivion. If Meredith still lives, and doubtless he does, it is in the human hearts and minds that need his life today.

Bernard Shaw once wrote a witty article entitled 'Who Is Hall Caine?' But I do not doubt someone

in all seriousness will ask one day: 'Who was Bernard Shaw?' And that despite the fact that his friend St. John Ervine can say in one breath Shakespeare, Sheridan and Shaw, a triple sh, which might suggest the hush of silence. In vain he postdates his plays A.D. 32,000 if the life of them be antedated.

* * * * *

The lickspittles creep up to Cæsar. 'Oh, Emperor' they cry, 'Immortal Emperor, you are not human, you are divine, you cannot die.' But nevertheless he dies, and the lickspittles crawl away.

> 'Warn all future Robert Brownings and Carlyles
> It will interest them to hunt among the files
> . . . That Kensal Green of greatness called the files
> In our newspapère-la-chaise the office files.'

Dead lies four-fifths of Browning. Dead lies half Carlyle. Carlyle in the white Chelsea bus trundled along every day for years to the British Museum and home again more morose and concentrated in the evening in a similar white two-horse bus, in the blessed reign of Queen Victoria. And all the sunlit hours he grubbed in German archives.

> 'I had long thought of Dullness [he wrote once], and I thought I knew it a little, but here is Dullness itself, ponds of it, oceans of it; widespread genuine Dullness, without parallel in this world. The hapless inquirer swashes to and fro, in the sorrow of his heart. If in this acre of stagnant water he can pick up half a peascod, let him thank his stars.'

Carlyle picked up his half peascods, but now they have mostly rotted with the rest. Thus—ten volumes of

'Frederick the Great,' much bought in its time, but dusty now on almost all shelves in the world.

Great in his day was James Anthony Froude, Carlyle's biographer. He wrote 'Short Studies on Great Subjects,' which everyone read. He also wrote 'The Nemesis of Faith.' And someone replied with 'The Nemesis of Froude.' But both books are dead. Then an historian called Paul, no saint, wrote a mean biography of Froude, and now Paul is dead and his works are dead as well. The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord!

There is a dining club in London called 'The Omar Khayyam Club,' composed mostly of old famous men. And when they were young they dined with roses in their hair. And now they still wear roses when they dine, and when one dies they turn down an empty glass. There you may meet Augustine Birrell, who once wrote 'Obiter Dicta,' *vide* files, a famous book in its day. And old and grey and full of years sits Anthony Hope Hawkins, who wrote 'The Chronicles of Count Antonio' and 'The Dolly Dialogues,' and many another thrilling, charming work. All in the barrow, choose what you will.

And there one used to meet a debonair journalist and critic, a collector and lisper of sentimental verse, who thought 'Annabel Lee' the greatest poem in the language, the late Lewis Hind, once editor of a paper that once existed, the old *Academy*. He drank his cup 'a round or two before. . . .'

Your eyes light on W. W. Jacobs, and you remember a laughter, an unquenchable laughter, coming from the

open door of the Post Office when he escaped, and from the barges and trawlers where he found life and fun and made his name.

There are speeches. Always at dinners, speeches; and there are toasts, a raising of glasses with red wine.

> 'O my beloved, fill the cup that clears
> To-day of past regrets—and future fears.'

So one whispers to his guest, and his guest replies—

> 'The stars are setting, and the caravan
> Starts for the dawn of nothing, O make haste!'

The dawn of nothing! A wan dusty crowd of writers with pens in their hands are pilgrimaging thither, and on the road are waggons drawn by lean nags and stacked with books. They are going Eastward, they are going out there into the silent country where the

> 'Rudyards cease from Kipling
> And the Haggards ride no more.'

A book is conceived, written, published. It is reviewed, exhibited in shops, bought, perchance read; it is lent, it is not returned. It reposes on a shelf. Someone picks it up, borrows it, forgets about it, leaves it on another shelf. It collects dust. It is dusted by a maid and replaced upside down. In this humiliating posture it remains till death of borrower. It passes into possession of an heir. He sells it with others to a dealer. Being by that time, let us say, twenty years old, it is sadly marked down in price. It is not in request. After a year or so a clergyman buys it and begins to quote it in his sermons, but after a while loses it and forgets it.

A tall parishioner, disapproving of it, has visited the vicarage library and lifted the book on to a high shelf. Ten years later a curate revises the library, finds the book, and turns it out. It is sold at a church bazaar to someone who does not want it. Fifty years after birth it returns to the second-hand shop, but proves to be completely unsaleable. Originally some three thousand copies were printed, and they are reposing on three thousand dusty shelves in many parts of the world.

Books ride out in pretty jackets on ' guaranteed subscriptions,' and they come back shabby and soiled. And they may ride again, twice, thrice, several times—till their short season has passed. Then they accumulate in the central warehouse of W. H. Smith or some kindred establishment. They filled their allotted space on alphabetical shelves; they grow into mountains on the floor; they rise on lifts to the floor of book-bins. Sadly looks the two-guinea biography up there. Thence to the literary crematorium!

But there are more tragical aspects of dying books to be observed than at the central repository of a multiple library. Near to where I live is an old-established bookseller. He started with a small shop and a few thousand old books nicely classified and ticketed. He has now two mansions stacked with books; he has had to buy houses in a side-street for his overflow of books. He has pulled down old houses and erected a sky-scraper for old books, tier upon tier to the sky, and he advertises:

OVER ONE MILLION BOOKS ON EVERY CONCEIVABLE SUBJECT.

You look upward as you pass his shop, and see books of all colours stacked even to the windows. His original shop-front suggests the imbroglio of a railway terminus at a busy hour: the terminus of books. Books are arriving in suit-cases, in taxis, in vans. They all have a sort of lost air, as if not sure whether they belong to the first or second class or third class waiting room, or the cloak room, or lost property office.

Inside the old shop the racks used to be so close that Mr. Chesterton might have had difficulty to get about even sideways. Below were cellars, extensive and spacious, which no doubt in another era accommodated old wine, dusty and dank, and at last smelling of old bindings and decaying leather to remind me of the catacombs of Kief.

To get to the proprietor seemed to me in my youthful days a sort of Dantesque pilgrimage into the kingdom of the dead, a fitting reminder and reproval for an author. For the owner of it all sits away at the back behind veil upon veil of oblivion, behind the dusty spider's web of time and old ideas.

To this establishment, when in London, I constantly have recourse. Sometimes, it is true, I buy a book. Day after day passing the book-stricken corner my steps naturally slow down and the eyes linger questioningly upon the covers of old books. But there is that Carlylean Dullness once again, the wilderness of unsaleable books. I smell the decayed remains of Nelson's shilling library, once blue, now faded. I see Froude's ' Oceana '; thirty copies of ' The Blood Stone,' by Irene Osgood; a Pulpit Commentary; the ' British Nepos '; volumes

of elegant extracts. Who wants to buy ' The Heavenly Twins ' for a dime, or ' Won by Waiting ' or ' The Woman Who Did '? (did what?) Who thrills to ' Trilby ' now? An attendant public grubs, turns over, rakes, stares, opens and shuts volumes, and now and then redeems some book that is not dead.

I go there, not to buy, but to sell. Some men are collectors; some collect what is precious and interesting, some collect indiscriminately. But I am not a collector, dislike even the idea of collecting. Every evening the waste-paper-basket is full. I hold that there is no advantage in keeping books which I shall never read again. I turn them up. There is a mounting pile of them, and when the pile becomes unsightly I take them over to the great emporium of old books. It seldom refuses to receive them. There is a marvellous all-embracing dull hospitality to old books. I sit on a heap of odd volumes and read any old book that catches my eye while the ' buyer ' examines the newcomers. Presently a boy comes sidling round the racks.

' He says " Seven and six for the lot." '

I am inwardly convulsed with mirth.

' Why, that's not much for twenty books,' I answer.

' Well, eight shillings is the most he'll go,' says the boy.

' All right; hand it over.'

That extra sixpence is a ritual; you must get that.

Once I brought the books in a ruined suit-case which had been beaten, bobbed, and thumped from London to New York and then to Mexico City and half-way round the world. Pitifully it had struggled home, all corded and reinforced.

I still chuckled to myself as I received a check for eight shillings.

'And the suit-case,' said I, with a bow, 'I will throw in.'

'Very good, sir!' replied the boy with adequate dignity.

The shop has had several hundred books from me, books that I could be sure I'd never read again. But I've never seen one of them get on to the outside racks with a price marked on it. That's the worst of having a million. It is easy to lose sight of what you have.

However, a book of the kind has more chance of finding the man who can use it when it is in the shop than when on private shelves. It by no means follows that a book which is dead to me is dead to everyone else. If it had voice it could well say: 'The friends I seek are seeking me,' or, again, from the same poem, 'Lo! Mine own shall come to me.'

That is well for me. A full waste-paper-basket denotes literary health. It is well for the book because it gets a chance of life and service. And it is good certainly for the stranger who is in need of the book. But there is one dreadful question which one has to put as to the fate of old books. The books you do not read go to the dealers, but what of the books that no one will read any more. What happens to them? The answer, I fear, is more dreadful even than the question. *They are pulped.* There is a melancholy residuum of literature, nobodies who once were somebodies, creatures which once were men's, pallid now and dry, or perchance damp and swollen, tattered and shabby, or it may be, not much

damaged, not even cut, not dog-eared. They have had a migratory history, from inside to outside and upstairs to downstairs, priced separately, reduced, sent to rows of all one price, dislodged, thrown into the miscellaneous with a notice ' No reasonable offer refused,' and last of all dropped in a deep, dark barrel. The pulper then cometh with motor hearse and taketh them away and their story endeth.

Every moment dies a book; every moment one is born. For those who sit in review offices and for those who browse in Brentano's or Bumpus's the latter fact seems more obvious. Every moment one is born. Someone asks—Where do all the books go to? Where to-day are all those copies of ' The Rosary '? Who is holding on to ' Main Street ' and the myriad-fold novels? Where is the room? We can take comfort in the fact that in darkness and obscurity at the other end the reverse of the procreative process is always going on. The dead books are being carted away and decently changed into something new.

* * * * *

Of course, there is some tragedy connected with death. Some books die young. Some on which fond hopes were fixed have been stillborn. Others, in their fate, are like strangled babes. Reviewers are said to have murdered books, and bigger books have killed smaller books. Dull books have hidden witty books and starved them of human gaze. And mass stupidity of men and women has been the cause of many a good book languishing unto death.

Benevolent readers stare at rows of dead books and wonder if there may not be one of them that belies its title and its appearance. Many a man or woman has raised dead books to life as a result of searching the dusty racks. Some old books which seemed dead twenty years ago are now among those most full of life. I used, as a youth, to search all the old book shops for translations from the Russian. That was before the great excitement which Russian literature has caused. Dostoievsky had been translated, but had been allowed to die. Few read his works. Even ' Crime and Punishment ' was unobtainable in the book stores. You could buy the novel out of the barrows of last resort; you could get it for next to nothing. For Dostoievsky seemed to be dead. The same applied to Chekhoff—whose work appeared, sold a little, was remaindered, and disappeared. The most excellent volume of Chekhoff's stories, that called ' The Black Monk,' was once an unsaleable book! To buy that volume and read it to one's friends was once to me the means of considerable happiness.

Doubtless to be a true Christian among books is to keep a hopeful spirit in the face of all that seems blank and drear. This generation has witnessed the raising of several books from death, notably Melville's ' Moby Dick,' Gogol's ' Dead Souls,' Doughty's ' Travels in Arabia.' Many books no doubt are dead for all eternity, but of a few in every age, it may be said simply: they sleep.

II

Petrarch and Laura

Morning is late at Vaucluse, for a great rock shuts off the East. Out of the rock, or rather from under it, floods forth unceasingly a great volume of ' clear, fresh, and sweet waters '; the river Sorgue takes its rise full-grown at birth. It has a birth as grand as death, welling upward from an abyss no plummet has ever sounded, blue and still, without sound or foam, ever increasing, never changing; it comes forth from the hidden heart of the world, forever spending, forever unspent, like the love of God.

Some yards away the waters break in white confusion as they tumble downward on the rock-strewn way to the Rhone. They surge in long green channels, they roar through defiles. But at the fountain itself there is peace. The closing rock, hundreds of feet high, worn inward by water through the ages, broods over the flood a half-formed brown dome, and on each hand rise other cliffs like walls of a natural temple. Sunbeams from a hidden sun shine aloft on flowers and bees, and in the column of air over the still blue of the water dance the birds.

It was here on a certain morning in 1328 that the poet Petrarch saw a fair form arise, superbly beautiful, pure and inviolable, his human Madonna, the Laura of his dreams and inspiration. He had seen her first in a church porch at Avignon. She reappeared to him in his retreat, far from pleasure and the haunts of men. Out of the mirror depths of the beautiful and serene

fountain she arose. Petrarch, enchanted, thought to die then and there at Vaucluse. She whom he saw surely was born in Paradise.

The vision faded; Petrarch did not die. In strange solitude he roamed the hills, he climbed the great cliffs, ' pen in one hand a sheet of paper in the other,' so he wrote. He lost himself in the woods, or sitting on rocks in the sun he lost himself equally in his thoughts. In strange seclusion, he lived in an old stone house in the midst of shelf upon shelf of old Latin books, loved books which he prized more than life: had he not ransacked the libraries and monasteries of Europe for them, and by them raised Latin from the dead? All day he fasted, supped frugally at night, and by dim light of candles pored over old tomes. To the peasants and those who served him he was an enigma. They could not understand his ways—that a man should forego pleasure and the material happiness of the body, yet not a monk; a famous man, yet a recluse.

An exile from Italy, he was born in exile. That made a great difference in his soul. He was a born exile, soul in exile, spirit in exile, body in exile. His poems to Laura are the poems of spiritual exile. In the great rock of the Fountain of Vaucluse he saw the rock whose ' back was to Rome,' the rock which separated him from Laura. Laura may be Laura de Noves, or the laurel of fame, or it may mean God, or it may mean Italy or ancient Rome. He loved ' Laura '; he loved Rome not less. The greatest moment of his life was when they called him out of exile to Rome and crowned him there with *laurel*, the universal king of letters in his age.

Avignon he hated. It was to him the Babylon of the Apocalypse. He never ceased to think the Popes, chased from Rome, were wrong to take up their abode on the banks of the Rhone. He cursed the pontifical court for its vice and corruption. The Pope was glad to have Petrarch in his entourage; it heightened even a Pope's prestige to have such a poet near him. The Pope supported him, for Petrarch was poor. But the poet nevertheless raged always and exceedingly against the 'other-Rome.' He was jealous for Rome. It was almost as if he foresaw the great coming schism which was to rend the Catholic Church in parts, when Europe was to have three Popes at the same time, anathematising and excommunicating one another—pope of Rome, pope of Avignon, pope of Pisa.

But he was a mystic and a poet before he was a politician; he was the inspiration of thousands, not in his own age alone but in succeeding ages. Something of the quality of the fountain where he saw Laura was in the actual genius of the poet himself.

The 'Shut valley' of Vaucluse may well remain sacred to the memory of Petrarch; God does not always grant each man some spot to love, but He grants to Petrarch and Laura and their heirs in perpetuity a sacred memory at the Fountain of Vaucluse.

Nine centuries pass, and a people arise who know not Petrarch, but we remember that the people who were there in his day did not understand him then. All things have changed, but it is not different at the Fountain. Still the well of water undefiled rises upward an ever-present marvel and mystery, out of the hidden

depths, out of the same heart of the world, upward, blue and brimming. High among the cliffs you hear a murmur; it is the harmonised echoing of the sound of the waters as they break lower down in the rocks of the valley. The birds dance in the air. There is stillness and mystery as of old.

The village of Vaucluse, which has not grown to be a town, is featured by a public place in the midst of which is a high stone column inscribed 'HOMMAGE A PÉTRARQUE,' opposite which a stone bridge crosses the Sorgue and rock-stairs climb upward toward the ruins of a mediæval castle. From the castle wall there is a sheer drop of a hundred and fifty feet, but skirting the abyss in loveliness undisturbed one may climb to a great height. The air is pungent with herbs and spices and especially with the odours of wild thyme and rosemary. The bee orchis is so common one treads on it by accident. Wild lilies lift beautiful buds under the silver-green shade of olives. Lying on a ledge and looking down at the fountain one listens to the song of birds. A lark soaring towards the sky comes to rest on the leaning cypress which shades you from the sun and pours forth pure happiness to your ears. Down below in the Place, beside the Petrarch column, there may be pandemonium of trippers and hawkers, motor-horns and barks of dogs. But rarely, rarely, does anyone mount to this height. Petrarch lay up here in the sun and shade. But there are no Petrarchs now.

There is, however, a 'Café de Pétrarch et Laure'! Devastating modern accident . . . as if he met her there! They meet their Lauras nowadays at cafés if

at all. There is a ' Grand Hôtel de Pétrarque et Laure ' (fishing rights reserved), which is not too grand. There is a ' bateau automobile Laure '—but I say too much. There are picture postcards showing Petrarch meeting Laura. It is felt that Petrarch and Laura are the mysterious presiding angels of the place. It is the place of their *romance*. Yes, that is it—the ' great lovers.'

On Sundays and on days of fête the charabancs arrive, tooting and roaring, full of men and women of the Provençal industrialism, drab men and lively girls. The mechanical band set up under one of the great shady sycamores of the Place brays forth the strains of Madelon or the Brise Provençale. Under broad awnings Spanish workmen are playing cards. Hawkers of trumpets, favours, revolving coloured discs and *berlingots* cry their wares. The old town-crier with braided hat and silver-mounted cane smokes a cigar and struts. Arrive the two Avignon excursions; arrive the omnibuses from L'Isle-sur-Sorgue, and the horse-shays from Cavaillon and Carpentras! Out tumble the trippers. Eh voilà! La fontaine! With diverse racket arrive in streams the tin can little cars, the one-seaters, the two-seaters, and with aplomb and processional dust the heavy six-seaters and tourers from Nice, from Cannes, from God-knows-where. The women are more remarkable than the men—as if there were more potential Lauras than potential Petrarchs—women in leather hats, in picture hats, in Provençal bonnets, in jockey hats; women in neat silk jumpers and slight skirts, neat, svelte, chic; richer and grander women in black with black veils; poor and more rustic ones in

lurid cottons. Except for the picturesque wastrels of the village one's eyes rest seldom on the men. They are weedy, they are squat and expressionless, or noisy, rowdy, loquacious. They go to the fountain, throw a stone in it and return, eat fried eels with red wine under the awnings of the cafés under the great trees, stare at the dusty ancient laurel wreaths at the base of Petrarch's Column, listen to Madelon, lift their eyes to the ruins of the castle of the Cardinal de Cabassole and to the eagle's eyrie of the great eastern rock. Something is missing. There is a *jeu aux flèches*, and youths compete before the targets for a bottle of champagne. Many misses! Many outers! Comes forth the town-crier, laconically, raises his little horn in the palm of his hand and blows it, then without lifting his voice he enunciates something—*Paup*, *paup*, *paup* . . . Messieurs, Mesdames. . . .

All the children run to him and collect around him; the dogs bark, the motors toot, the musical box blares on, the diners lift their asparagus stalks and pause. He is saying something, but no one can tell what.

The promenade to the fountain goes on, and men and women in twos step gingerly up the rocky trail. There is a mystery about the place which has nothing to do with the heavy fumes of chlorine from the paper-factories or with the rag-warehouses or the great chimney stacks. Up the rocky way they go to where in solitude the voice of seven silent centuries was silent again before his vision of the Ideal.

The factory-owners are freeholders of all the land—except the precincts of the fountain. *Lieu historique*—

it belongs to the Commune of Vaucluse and to the French nation. The visitors stand on the rocks, bemused, like sleeping gulls poised on single legs. It is a shut valley—a blind alley, a *ne plus ultra*, and all must turn back, must retrace their steps. ' How beautiful it is, how sad!' they say, and, solemn for a moment, turn upon their steps and return. . . . And all the evening they will dance together in the Place, wearing coloured paper frills and favours and bearing paper discs which revolve in the wind.

Night puts its starry ceiling on the temple. And far from towns the village lights twinkle, and at the many tables of the cafés Provençal patois outrumbles the polite French of the visitors. The excursionists pack up and go. Goes the Avignon carry-all and l'Express de la Fontaine and the horse-shays and the Citroens. The slow moon climbs over the rocks and pensively looks down, and the man in the moon reclining on her shoulder looks down also to the dark fountain below.

The rocks are gigantesque at night, and their black shadows have a precipice edge where they give way to the silver of moonlight. There is a loneliness there at night as if only one person were there, and that one jealous of his solitude and of his possession. The fountain seems black and opaque and obscure. The dome above it is not lighted by the moon, and you cannot see into the recesses. It is there perhaps that Petrarch waits, waits for you to be gone. There will be moonlight and starlight when you are gone, and star-reflections in the water. There will be cautious steps

in the dark and a peering of old eyes and a whisper, a voice murmuring in Italian—

> ' Where art thou, my beloved?
> Wilt thou not come again
> As once thou didst come
> Like a flower-laden tree
> Shedding petals and fragrance on thy way?'

Sleep Vaucluse and France and Italy and the old Popes and Petrarch in his coffin of stone. Laura is among the stars. The lovers have gone home; the dancers have ceased dancing, and the mechanical band is silent. The missed target of the *jeu aux flèches* remains. The chairs of the Café of Petrarch and Laura have been piled on the tables. All has gone quiet in the shut valley—all except the Sorgue, which, departing from its pure source, rolls tumultuously on, eager to reach the Rhone and the sea.

There is a silence belov'd of ruins and of the past, and the moon pouring downward distils a pure romance in which it seems no human beings of to-day can share. Thus Sunday and its pilgrimage to the fountain end. The jealous age in which we live soon makes its clamorous demands, yelling through the valley, from factory to factory. Sirens howl from dawn to men's beds and their minds and their hands. Back Petrarch! Perish Laura!

' He-ll,' they shriek through the valley, and in response a tableau of the life of our age is shown when dowdy girls and men in ragged and dusty overalls slouch to the bridges. Dogs whimper and children cry

at the sound of the sirens, these terrific bugles of industrialism.

As I sat at the café on the Monday morning, listening to the whirr of the machines, I observed that the hotel-proprietor had used the column of homage to Petrarch, the noble pillar in the midst of the Place, as a post to which to tie his awnings. Eight ropes and chains bound the café to Petrarch's monument, and the fame of the poet is symbolically fettered at his own fountain.

Yet, having lain where he lay among the flowers, and dreamed where he dreamed, I affirm Petrarch and his vision as a greater reality than the factories, his poetry than the urgency of their siren calls, his Laura more real than the Lauras of the cafés and our age.

III

The Island of Hugo and Swinburne. No One's Island: Sark

The trees turn their branches away from the cliffs as if aghast; the trunks bent double at the middle by an age of fog and wind make uncompleted trailing archways over the sunken lanes. A white mist blows upward, pours upward, hurries upward from the sea, driven by a voluble north-west wind. It is not cold, it is not harsh, but it wraps you and breathes upon you and breathes over you. The long-drawn calls of the Guernsey fog-hooters boom faintly and plaintively in the ears. For all round the ten miles of wild broken line of coast the waves are breaking on half-hidden rocks. Underfoot everywhere are rain-washed primroses, sea-pinks, and hyacinth all in such unexampled abundance that their bright blossoms have changed the colour of every valley and nook and bank. And in the range of the eye is the fringe of a land ocean of golden gorse looking smoky and sleepy in the fog as the vision of a dream. The whole island is high above the sea, a tableland from which the way to every shore is precipitous or broken. The waves cannot be seen from the height of the cliff —but the waves can be heard through the fog, roaring into chasms and gullies and breaking in indescribable confusion upon rocks. The white foam-scud like light petals or down is racing through the air and mingling and dancing in the chiffon-like mist. Every rock is wet and dank and slippery, and the foam petals settle against them high up, and dissolve like large flakes of snow and

sleet. Lower down upon the cliffs other cliffs are visible, and anon the foaming, hurrying, tumultuous white waves. On the rocks, dejected and miserable, the white gulls sit huddled in twos, unmoving, uncalling, whilst down below on the sea all is milk white. Each wave that arrives tiger like, bounding and clawing and ravishing, is white right through, one great mad life-bound of spray. The sunken rocks are surrounded with the intensity of sea-fury. The long narrow channels along which the constricted billows rush, carrying long roaring masses of ravening white foam, are like so many white trains arriving and destroying themselves. The promontories of black low-lying rocks which defeat the sea are scenes of the greatest adventure, for whole waves lift themselves bodily on to the top of them and collapse in a whiteness as of overset churns of milk. In the vast caves and chasms of which there are so many the echoes of the sea and the confusion at their entrances resound from crimson or green roofs. The devil's cauldron is assuredly and decidedly as it is named, and outside the last ring of the whirlpools in those accidental calm points in the grand confusion the yellow froth of dragons' mouths accumulates—banks of clotted yellow foam which you could hit with a stick if you could get near to them. It is from these perhaps that the wandering white petals arise on the wind.

It is not, however, always so or lastingly so—the fog mysteriously ceases to rise, and at the change of the tide the wind moderates, the sky becomes visible, its clouds receive mysterious congé from the sun and making long curtsies in their long trailing dresses of

white, withdraw from the royal presence. The islets and the rocks are left free, the blue sky discloses itself, the flowers lose their tears, the gorse burns golden for a league. The island is only a league in length—but it is one marvellous sequence of the flaming bush of God. The storm is as if forgotten, and as if no sea fog had ever dimmed the brightness of the skies. All becomes serene. All becomes unutterably lovely as if Eden had been unexpectedly re-created after wrath and sin. Even the sea soothes its passion and relents towards the rocks, and is content in the channels and ceases writhing where the whirlpools were. It reflects heaven's blueness once more, and the tiny white wings which dart and poise and glide. For the gulls have become happy again and dance over the waves. The mother island of Guernsey is visible once more, and the horns have ceased to give their lugubrious warnings. The high rocks dry whilst the lower rocks are revealed, shaggy with green weed. It is possible to climb down to the shore; fisher boats put out again. The sunlight invades all the shadowy parts of the sea, making ever larger the sun's sparkling empire. Away to the south gleam the white shores of France, and if you have good eyes, or if with ordinary eyes you mount the tower of the seigneur, you may descry the spire of the cathedral of Coutances in Normandy, at which sight in olden time when the island was in that diocese you made, if you were devout, the sign of the cross.

It is the island of Sark, most beautiful of all the islands about the British coasts. It was discovered by some Abbot Sampson in the days of the splendour of the

Normans, and he gave it to St. Magloire, and it became an island of monks and hermits. All little islands were hermitages in the Middle Ages, and the more inaccessible the more welcome. Anchorites lit the first lighthouse lamps and tolled the first warning bells, and sailormen drifting toward perilous rocks blessed God and the monks when the warnings were observed and steered a better course. For 700 years this patch of utter loveliness called Sercque was yet another Holy Island, and like an Iona and a Lindisfarne was consecrated only to God. Seven hundred years of prayers and then there came a change. All Europe sounded with church bells, and every road had its pilgrims. There was an age of faith and then, I suppose, as was natural, a gradual weakening and relaxation toward an age of beauty, power, and pleasure. It became unfashionable for French monks to live on desert islands, and Sercque was abandoned, and this little Eden ceased to be a chosen spot for the fighting of Satan and the world.

When the monks went the pirates came. Sark became a most unholy island, and the spire of Coutances gleamed in vain from the bright Norman shore. The devils whom the monks had defied and annoyed took their vengeance. No vessel plying between England and the islands but was in danger of being boarded by the island bandits. Many a treasure of gold and a cask of good wine did the pirates bring back to the many-coloured caves and wild rocks of the island.

Sark then as ever was practically inaccessible because of its sheer cliffs and its thousands of hidden rocks and rapid currents. Certainly no one could land on the

island without the goodwill of those on shore. So for many years the pirates defied all comers and gained a large quantity of spoil.

However, in course of time vengeance was taken on these desecrators of holiness and murderers of innocent seamen. A boatful of determined men from Sussex set out fully armed to fight the seadogs. And they lay off the Eperquerie with flag at half mast, and a swimmer went ashore to say that the master of their vessel had died at sea, and enquired whether he might be buried in consecrated soil. This was part of a stratagem, for in truth the captain was perfectly hale and hearty, but his death was feigned as a ruse to get ashore. The pirates said they might bring their master in and bury him, but no weapon of any kind must be brought. ' For,' they reasoned, ' once he is buried, what is to prevent us falling upon these simple souls and securing whatever is on their ship ?'

The boatmen made a coffin and filled it with weapons and then came ashore apparently unarmed, but with all their arms in the heavy coffin which they bore. The hearse was put down in the chapel which the monks had left. Some of the pirates looked on curiously, but before they had time to give an alarm, and without any prayers or hymns, each boatman took a weapon from the coffin, and the captain, far from dead, led them to the destruction of the bandits. The enemy, taken unawares, divided and ran to the rocks and the caves. There was shouting and screaming of alarm and cries of vengeance and defiance and then silence. The men of Sussex killed all whom they could find, and they stayed

on the island some days, and brought the pirates' treasures to the ship and then sailed away home to England.

For 200 years after that neither God nor devil knew the island. It was utterly uninhabited and belonged to Nature alone. Only in the reign of Good Queen Bess a certain Sieur de Carteret discovered it, and surveyed it, and obtained a charter for it, and he with forty other families took possession of Sark, and in the hands of their descendants it remains till this day.

It still has its seigneur, its forty tenants, its ancient feudal laws, its immunity from interference from abroad. As the people lived in the sixteenth century, so they live to-day—in a veritable cobweb of conservative law. They cannot sell their property without the consent of even remote relatives; if a stranger builds a house on the island he loses his rights to it after ten years; for every chimney in the house you must give the seigneur *poulage—i.e.*, a chicken every year; the seigneur will have a tenth of your sheaves and a tenth of your cattle each year; you must have his consent before marriage. He for his part is above the law. Until but recently, if you did not draw your blinds at curfew he might fire on your windows with a shot-gun and you could get no redress against him, unless you could lure him over the waves into the jurisdiction of Guernsey.

Hermits, pirates, feudal lords—the next to come were literary men. An island of pirates and poets. Victor Hugo arrived, and Swinburne coming after him enquired:

> 'Was the isle not enkindled with light of him landing, or thrilled not with sound?'

We are so vain, desiring always that that which we admire shall admire us. And God shall look at man and say: ' What a handiwork! What a handiwork!'

And Swinburne passed like one of his own dying alexandrines. But the voice of the island is still heard in the marvellous sea music of his verse:

> ' As the flight of the thunder, full
> Charged with its word,
> Dividing the wonderful
> Depths like a bird,
> Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the
> night that exults to have heard . . .'

* * * * *

The island is wasting into the sea. At the wasp-waist of the coupé it is a miracle how the two parts of its body hold together. At a touch from the foot whole boulders can be loosened and sent plunging and splintering to the sea. Its material substance is frayed and broken and channelled and eaten away. That rare spiritual beauty which is featured along its marvellous shores comes from the sufferings of the very body of the island. It is a rare glory to be only three miles in length and yet show ten miles of loveliness. Those deep dark caves which may be only visited at low tides are, as it were, self-explorings of Sark. The little island has been searching its own heart. By the doorways in the rocks and the long low channels you may swim from sea to sea and experience to experience. In the deep and lovely pools you may learn innocence and calm. But the wild seas worked those doorways, and the chalices which hold those lovely wells of purity were hollowed

by the intensity of the struggling sea. It is first of all a spiritual island and has a beauty which arises from its own suffering and destruction.

Or look at it again from a more sombre point of view; it has its *creux terrible*, its great pit of despair and mere internal landslide which, as it were, reflects the moral landslide of the monks' abandonment. It has its sinister stormy cape where the pirates used to land, and the huge ugliness of the caves called *Les Boutiques*. It has the morbid and haunted cave of lamentations where you can still hear the choking agony of the pirates who were killed. It was a holy island. It is a pirate island.

Or look once more and with unclouded eyes. All that you thought earlier is embraced and confirmed and ratified or forgiven in one great loveliness, the loveliness of the smiling face with which the island looks to the sky, the loveliness of the myriads of wild flowers and of the flaming gorse. In these it is neither poet's nor pirate's island, neither God's nor devil's, but Nature's, and that is both.

IV

Chesterton of Battersea and Beaconsfield

'This is the sort of book we read—
For you and I are very small—
With pictures stuck in anyhow
And hardly any words at all.

'Stand up and keep your childishness;
Hear all the pedants' screeds and strictures,
But don't believe in anything
That can't be told in coloured pictures!'

He was the greatest essayist of his age, and somewhat of a rhymer too. These lines provide perhaps an expression of his literary credo.

Long ago, how long ago it seems now, the London streets were paved with gold, London fog was a spiritual ozone, and the red pillar-boxes of Battersea were part of fairyland—to G. K. C. That is what London was to Chesterton before he went to live at Beaconsfield. And Chesterton was to London someone other than he became later. He was our Diogenes, and the *Daily News* was his tub. He made mirth, he said provoking truths, he sought for the sun with his candle. He took the air on Saturdays, inviting the censure of the drab and the heavy and the respectable, in fact, of many of those who did him honour afterwards. He was 'angry and poor and happy,' and the rest of us, those who waited for his weekly Saturday appearance in the *Daily News*, were each of these things except poor. He enriched us by his sayings, by his wit, by his bright gifts of fantasy.

'We dream of the days when work was scrappy
And rare in our pockets the mark of the mint,

he wrote. His fame did not make him fat. He became more famous for being fat than he was ever fat through being famous.

He made the *Daily News* of his day a political force. It was Liberal, much more so than it is now, and he was Liberal, and together they were making Liberals—a sort of universal nursery of young Liberals who, in due course, swept to triumph. Perhaps if Liberalism had not had this triumph Chesterton would have remained with it. But success killed the spirit, and Diogenes came out of his tub and became a country squire.

It will seem absurd to the biographer: G. K. C. left his *Daily News* tub not because of some great inner necessity, unless truly 'beer' was for him an 'inner meaning' sufficient to cause him to rebel against the temperance *Daily News*. He suddenly dubbed his own literary home 'the Cocoa Press,' and on a matter of the relative merits of Cocoa and Beer gave notice to quit. He ceased to be Diogenes from that moment. For I am sure Diogenes would have been grateful if not comforted for a cup of the best of Epps.

Chesterton, in revengeful exaggeration, sang praises of beer. He popularised the literary idea of beer, discovering that.

'The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.'

Such roads are not found in Battersea, but begin at Beaconsfield—

> ' Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands.'

He learned then that St. George, before he killed the dragon,

> ' drank a pint of English ale
> Out of an English flagon.'

And he discovered that the Biblical Flood was the symbolical Curse of Water.

> ' You can't get wine at a P.S.A. or chapel or Eisteddfod
> For the Curse of Water has come again because of the Wrath of God.'

Chesterton the man of ideas became Chesterton the man of preferences. Suddenly the interpreter to his age of Christianity and Democracy is to be found preferring Beer to Cocoa and preferring it passionately. It was a curious phenomenon. Not that he actually himself was ' swilling beer like a Bavarian.' Beer did not swell him out to his suggestive size. His ' Will-someone-lead-me-to-a-Pub ' mood was the result of a morbid sensitiveness. It had been a mistake on the part of the *Daily News* to let him go so easily. He had been the soul of the paper, and though A. G. Gardiner was a very able writer there was no existing man in London who could fill Chesterton's place. Cadbury should have modified his policy, for the Liberalism of Chesterton was worth a good deal more than that of the rich Quaker manufacturer. G. K. C. was mortified.

Another mortification came in the shape of the Marconi scandal, and the passionate defence of his brother Cecil in the Isaacs libel action. His Liberals, whom he had

inspired to victory in 1906, were implicated through their leaders in some curious deals. The Lloyd-George-Isaacs friendship bore commercial fruits which were profoundly distasteful to the Chestertons. Young Chesterton, however, lost his case. Godfrey Isaacs was able to meet the Marconi scandal in law; his opponent was downed; finance-juggler triumphed over man of letters, alien-born over true-born, Jew over Christian. It was too much for G. K. C.'s morbid sensitiveness once more. He was unable to get over the humiliation of it—though he said it was the proudest moment of his life when his brother lost his case. Temperamentally, he did not like the Jews; his Catholic friend Belloc liked them no less, author of the quaint verse

> 'How odd
> That God
> Should choose
> The Jews.'

Witty men must have their butts. You cannot easily be witty except at someone's expense, and the appetite of Chesterton's wit needed a moral animus against Jews. It was really very dangerous for the soul of G. K. C.—much more dangerous than his spite against Cocoa. For anti-Semitism is a well-known mental disease, and is destructive of intelligence. It seeks its justification in cause, overlooking its refutal in effect. The effect is a sort of hysteria, akin to *delirium tremens*, in which one begins to 'see Jews'—

> 'They fight by shuffling papers; they have bright dead alien eyes.'

Chesterton's growing conviction that England was going to the dogs became identified with the idea that she was going to the Jews—' the jazzing will pass, but the Jews they will stay.'

He has always been a professed Christian. In his early years he was a promising force within the laity of the Church of England. He was on the side of the Spirit, and the Church needed him. And yet of course Christian men and women needed him more than any Church. ' If we all suddenly fell dead the Church would somehow still exist in God.' That is not very helpful. But the mystical personal Chesterton who wrote

> ' That though you hunt the Christian man
> Like a hare on the hillside
> The hare has still more heart to run
> Than you have heart to ride.
> That though all lances split on you,
> All swords be heaved in vain,
> We have more lust again to lose
> Than you to win again ';

and again:

> ' So, with the wan waste grasses on my spear,
> I ride for ever, seeking after God.
> My hair grows whiter than my thistle-plume,
> And all my limbs are loose; but in my eyes
> The star of an unconquerable praise.
> For in my soul one hope for ever sings,
> That at the next white corner of a road
> My eyes may look on Him . . .'

is one who values the Christian as more than the Church.

A reforming spirit in the Church of England, G. K. C. became a conservative in the Church of Rome. What led him to Roman Catholicism is too simple for explanation. He was no Newman and had no apologia. Revolt against Quakers and Cocoa, against the Nonconformist conscience and the *Daily News*; influence of Buckinghamshire, Belloc, mediævalism, dislike of Jews and Liberals, led him to the fold. He pictured a mediæval Catholicism which was childlike, simple, and clean, and in revolt against the expression of his age he became a Catholic, choosing to take sanctuary rather than come out and fight. So we lost the white knight. And that was unfortunate for England.

Chesterton was very ill during the Great War, and his sickness awakened profound sympathy. For many understood and valued him, and owed him a deep debt of gratitude for his spiritual championings and the knight-errantry of his earlier years. He survived to be more famous—but as an ornament of letters rather than a force in them. He survived in cap and bells without even a sword of lath. But how we needed him! How we needed the St. George who had been!

Chesterton was a revolutionary; he expected and hoped for the downfall of princes and lords, and more especially for lately created lords. He is almost as much a republican as H. G. Wells, but in what a different way. A Chestertonian republic and a Wellsian republic would forever be at war.

He hoped for the rise of the real English people. Our wrath is to come after Russia's wrath and our wrath prove the worst. Yes,

'We are the people of England.
But we have not spoken yet.'

If we have not spoken we really have had plenty of time.

Chesterton is forever in arms. He is the reverse side of the sovereign, a static St. George fighting the dragon with a short spear. He is fighting till the world be free. But he has not fought for what the other revolutionaries are fighting: not for Marxism, not for Socialism or the Simple Life, or Birth Control, or secularism or agnosticism. He has fought not to hurry on the twenty-first century, but to recapture the serenity of the fourteenth. That serenity may be false in history, but can be true in art. The best in Chesterton is a craving to understand God and man through art. He was able to write of G. F. Watts that he put forth his strong right hand, and the Lord hath done wonderful things. Art, true art, is dateless. Thus it was possible that Chesterton's greatest admiration could be given to Charles Dickens. In Dickens he descried that serenity, that childishness which he associates with the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.

He likes to dress up as Dr. Johnson. But that is truly a disguise. If he dressed as Don Quixote he would be too like himself. Strangely accoutred he sallies forth to strange battles, inflicting great punishment on things as they are, on flocks of sheep and windmills. He has said Fee-fo-fum to F. E. Smith and has affrighted Cadbury. Like Don Quixote also he has received more chastisement than he ever gave. He became steeped in Kipling and Browning, as the Knight of the Rueful Countenance

was in Amadis of Gaul. Hilaire Belloc has been his Sancho Panza.

Someone should immortalise Chesterton in caricature, prodigious upon his Pegasus-Rosinante, tilting at a cocoa advertisement, amazing the Jews and blessed by the Pope.

V

Laird and Caballero : Cunninghame Graham

There are many Grahams who wield the pen. The name is not so common out of Scotland, but it abounds in the literary world. There is Cunninghame Graham and Kenneth Graham, and there is Harry Graham and Winifred Graham, and William Graham the economist, and then—

> ' I too have laboured somewhat in my time.
> Let some good son paint my two hundred pictures.'

' The Grahams, the Grahams, the gallant Grahams,' the minstrel sang hundreds of years ago.

Some of us were knights in a bygone age. One could fill a volume with the ballads which tell of their fame and their shame—

> ' Of all the knights in this countree
> Sir John the Grame, he bears the gree.'

One of us was the betrayer of Wallace, ' he of Menteith '; another was the great Marquis who died for King Charles; whilst yet another was ' Bloody Clavers,' who died for the Stuarts at Killiecrankie, shot by a Whig with a silver button—no lead could kill him. It is unlucky for a Graham to wear green—

> ' Yellow's forsaken, green's forsworn,
> Blue is the colour that ought to be worn,'

is a tradition of the family. The name represents romance, chivalry, and violence. It is a true blue name, and if tradition were a constraint, all Grahams would be Tories.

Many of us, however, became border thieves and land-loupers. The border Grahams lived more by robbery than by tillage, and a pair of spurs served in an empty dish was the call to action. Their names were listed in scores by the sheriffs of Carlisle. How many were caught and hanged, God knows. The border ballads have endless stories of their forays.

But that, like the doings of the knights, belongs to the past. The nineteenth century settled down upon Scotland and wooed the clans to the adoration of a Hanoverian Queen. Police and civilisation gripped the wild border. The robbers became mere poachers. The sons of the cattle-thieves settled the land and went lower still in the social scale; some as bondagers were, like peons of Mexico, bought or hired with the land they worked. From that depth many have risen again through education, and by virtue of the spirit striving in the depths. But when one's great-grandfather was a serf one can no longer be said to have exclusively blue blood in the veins, one has had both the servile and the aristocratic point of view.

Still here we are to-day, knights of the pen. We have been down into the soil, and the children or grandchildren or great-grandchildren arise once more as knights of the pen, pen-tournamenting knights, turbulent, gallant, errant, adventurous.

In these days of vast ennoblement, when the plain Misters troop under the sword of the King and rise up knights—when the new 'Ladies' are all ordering Debrett to know who the other ladies are and the other knights and peers and peeresses and viscounts and the

rest—R. B. Cunninghame Graham prefers to remain unadorned. You will not even find his name in 'Who's Who.' He has not supplied that useful annual with the data. Cunninghame Graham is not a Who. There's no need to enquire about him. Graham is Graham—that's enough.

At Menteith he is a laird—'Laird, ye ken ane o' my forebears gaed to Bannockburn wi' the Graemes,' says a retainer. On the plinth in Trafalgar Square the same laird is the friend and comrade of Keir Hardie, a complete Red. 'Of all titles that mankind has in its power to bestow I prefer that of Liberator,' he wrote in 1920. 'Even the O.B.E. brings some damning merit in its train,' he wrote sardonically. And one of his favourite sayings is the well-known Scottish dictum—'The King can mak' a belted knight; he canna mak' Lochiel.' With all his Radicalism he is an aristocrat. He believes in the aristocracy which cannot be built up by Lloyd-Georges of newspaper-owners and soap-manufacturers. He puts race and breed out of comparison with merit and success. The uprise of the new nobility in Britain smells ill in his nostrils. So Cunninghame Graham revives not his barony, remains plain Mister, and consorts with the Reds.

> 'When every Jack's become a gentleman
> There's many a gentle person made a Jack.'

R. B. C. G. cannot be mistaken for a Jack, but if it is a knight who comes riding toward us 'tis the Black Knight with *Desdichado* on his shield. He is a Coeur de Lion in disguise, riding on to the tourney field to

support the weaker side to the dismay of bullies, cowards, and charlatans.

And yet, and yet! There is much about this disinherited knight that is ambiguous. He is in no sense a 'perfect-gentil knight,' nor a 'Bayard sans peur et sans reproche'; he is certainly not Mr. Greatheart. He is more like Don Quixote than any of these. He might have been potently in earnest and struck 'a great blow for Christ and progress,' but a fantastic strain crossed his mind early in life, something from Spain. A romantic lack of earnestness has invaded the dour and terrible earnestness of the Scot. Spain made the Black Knight into Don Quixote. He hath drunk of the Spanish potion.

What is it in Spain? There seems to be some power in the very idea of that country. In one of Dostoievsky's stories there is a woman whose conversation always skids at the mention of Spain—ah yes, Spain, the land of romance, where the orange blossoms and the Guadalquivir flows. Spain affects some people in that way, and they have their castles there—castles in Spain. *En Espagne* has a different significance in France—*ce n'est pas la civilisation, c'est en Espagne*. Richard Curle, too, a curious wanderer over God's earth, tells one of his best stories of a humorous suburban clerk who has a religion of *Rio de Janeiro*; he will never go there, but he knows all about it, is steeped in it. Something of this sort has infected the life of Cunninghame Graham.

For him, reality is Scotland; romance is South America. He is a bitter, sarcastic, even cynical, intellectual Scot,

tearing and rending his own country when he thinks of it—but suddenly melted and sentimentalised by Spain. He writes of a decidedly real Scotland, but of an unreal, unearthly, romanticised, golden Spain. It is even touching. He cannot be critical of the Latin.

Belief in another country not one's own is very human, it is part of the homesickness of the spirit—a ' having regard unto another country, even an heavenly.'

Cunninghame Graham has been to heaven and come back, but like other heavenly migrants he cannot say much about it. ' It was fine over there, *gauchos*, *estancias*, *potreros*, *sanchochos*, *Chinas*, singing *cielitos* on the *gato*, mounted on *agenos*, eating *carne con cuero*, dancing the *pericon*.'

What the devil is he talking about? Don't curse him. He's been to Spain, look at the light in his eyes. Well, well, he hath partaken of the juice of the vine and been bitten by equatorial fleas the like holds not Bonnie Scotland.

' *Adios*, *Don Guillermos*,' or perhaps ' *hasta luego*,' says he. ' I'll cross the Yi but not by the *balsa*. *El Zaino de la hacinda* is missing, but we cross the *Pasa de los Toros* in the morning.'

Good luck to you, then, and a pleasant return! The reader drops off at this point and returns sadly to Scotland. ' We meet again at Menteith.'

' Yes, at Menteith in the mist.'

I think the best story by Cunninghame Graham is one in the collection of Scottish stories called ' Beattock for Moffat,' which tells of a Scot trying to get back from London to his hills to die in peace. He has been taken

from his deathbed to a third-class carriage at Euston Station, and his brother and wife fret o'er him as they travel and rattle all night northward. Will he last to a sight of the hills, will he last to Beattock, will he last to Moffat? It seems as if the spirit in the dying man will bear him through, and he does get up over the Border into Scotland before he dies:

> 'All through the mosses which once were the Debatable Land on which the moss troopers of the clan Graeme were used to hide the cattle stolen from the "auncient enemy," the now repatriated Scotchman murmured feebly that it was bonny scenery, though a drearier prospect of "moss hags" and stunted birch trees is not to be found.'

The train rolled into Beattock, and the porters cried merrily, 'Beattock for Moffat, Beattock for Moffat; change here for Moffat,' and the consumptive Scot was taken out and put to sit on a wooden bench till the local train should arrive. And there he died. There he changed—for Moffat, for home and for eternity. In that spirit Cunninghame Graham himself returns and describes 'the bonnie scenery' of Menteith—and then, since he does not die, he reverts to his everyday Scottish pose.

And the secondary reaction to Scotland is what has given most of what is stimulating and diverting in Cunninghame Graham's writings. He criticises, probes, tears Scotland, and it at least amuses the Southrons. Concerning Spain and South America he does not criticise and rend. And his positive writing, his praise, has no manner of grip. He seems temperamentally disinclined to handle Spanish detail in the way he

handles the Scottish. It has been the fashion to praise him, and he has been praised indiscriminately and hailed as Master. But the Spanish stories, while they appeal to the romantically minded, do not often really get home to the imagination. Perhaps the Scottish ones would fail in this way also but for a brilliant wit and a continuous, never-flagging gift of mockery. Directly he tells you he has got to ' Glesca ' and that it is the ' Sawbath,' you know you are in for fun. Thus, the Scottish lady being told that the Lord walked in the fields and ate the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, did not hesitate to say, ' I ken that weel, and dinna think the mair of Him for that, so I'm just tellin' ye'; and the keeper of the house of ill-fame says to Christie Christison, ' I'll hae na whistlin' in ma hoose upon the Sabbath day. I canna hae my lassies learned sich ways, so stop it or get out . . . you and men like ye may defile their bodies; but whilst I live na one shall harm their souls, puir lambies, wi' whistlin' on His day. No, not in my hoose, that's what I'm tellin' ye.'

Scotland becomes Salvagia, full of religious hypocrisy and whisky, much faith but little charity—expectoration is a national sport, ' Thank you' and ' If you please ' are terms unknown.

In South America much politeness has to make up for being robbed, raped, murdered. That politeness is not hypocrisy, because you know it is only a style and a manner of approach. It is a great courtliness. In Spain and South America behold also real piety, piety without thought and without conscience, as simple as a string of beads. The harlot has the peace of God without a

sense of sin. And the man who goes to her can be a perfectly good Catholic. Cunninghame Graham, however, will not damn the Catholics as he damns the Presbyterians. Because for him Spain is romance, his sweet dream, his illusion.

The Scotsman ' prays to Gladstone and to Jehovah turn about.' Well, he has found out part of his error. For he does not pray to Gladstone any more. He wishes he could. But the poor Spaniard never had any Gladstone to pray to. Not that telling beads to a statesman could be of much avail.

When the ' meenister ' appears on the horizon, it's ' Janet, put away the whisky bottle and rax doon the Bible '—and there we have it, hypocrisy, the smell of something ill-constituted and in decay. It is unpleasant to the aristocratic nose.

South America has no pretensions. It is what it is; it pretends to be no more. But Scotch and English assume themselves to be God's chosen people in lieu of the Jews who got into disgrace two thousand years ago. ' Jahve created all things, especially the world in which we live, and which is really the centre of the universe, in the same way as England is the centre of the planet and as the Stock Exchange is the real centre of all England.' Thus begins his fantastic essay entitled ' The Niggers,' wherein he tells how all was prepared for the coming of the Anglo-Saxon race. To us—all other races, even French and Spaniards and Italians, are a sort of niggers, lower orders of the human species, to be treated with the licence given by God to a superior creation.

Over against this pretentious race behold its leader, of the time when Cunninghame Graham himself sat in Parliament, ' Gladstone, who, though in talk for fifty years, never contrived to say a single thing either original or worth remembering '; over against the pretensions of the race he sets the shame of the lives of our vast poor at home, he sets the deeds we dare not chronicle done at the outposts of Empire, he sets the character of the many dud Christian missionaries.

It will always be urged that he never described the brighter side nor recorded the redeeming features which in a life of much travel he must have seen. But there is no mistaking his bitter sincerity. The cry of the victim of the Inquisitor in the dungeon might be considered as unfair comment on the history of the Roman Catholic Church, but it was sincere, it is veritable. So with Cunninghame Graham. Coming to Glasgow or London after South America was torment:

> ' The blackened muddy snow, reminding one of something pure, defiled, then scorned and cast upon the mire, lay piled in heaps in the chief squares, left there by accident or by design, as if to give the magnates in their shapeless palaces the mumps, and render them as hideous as the great cubes of masonry in which they lived. Misery seemed to reign triumphant in the wilderness of bricks, where dulness strove with smug hypocrisy to make life unendurable. . . .
>
> ' Boys cold and pinched, with voices rendered harsh by all the gin their parents had imbibed, ran shouting out the names of newspapers, flourishing broadsheets on which the headings told of murders, adulteries, cheating and robbery; and smug-faced citizens and prurient-minded girls, their pink and white complexions strangely at

> variance with the twinkle in their eyes, eagerly stopped and bought them, jostling the men as if by accident, pleased at the contact with them as they passed, and yet taking offence at once if but a word was said, saving their conscience in the national way, which finds all things permissible if but due silence is preserved.'

It is certainly not a full and true picture of our life—but it is Cunninghame Graham's reaction to it. Blue is the colour that ought to be worn—or else red. Certainly not green. In a more soldierly and masculine way it is the same reaction as that of Graham of Claverhouse to the 'canting' Whigs, to the men waiting for the clock to strike twelve on Sunday night in order to feel free to murder. Bloody Clavers' disdain expressed itself briefly in 'Take that man out and shoot him,' and the other Graeme speaks daggers and guns though he use none. For all our success he has a complete denial—or worse than that, a whiff of grape-shot as he turns disdainfully away. He never says as his ship comes into Cadiz Bay:

> 'Here and here did England help me.'

He has no Kiplingesque indulgence and prayer, no 'Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget.' His God will say to Kipling, 'Verily I know you not.' The God of Hosts is dead and hears no prayers. But the God who can hear is He who said, 'I was in prison and ye came unto Me, sick and ye visited Me, naked and ye clothed Me, was hungered and ye gave Me meat, thirsty and ye gave Me drink, a stranger and ye took Me in.'

One of the most poignant of Cunninghame Graham's

stories—indeed it is terrible—is called ' Calvary,' the story of a chestnut mare betrayed from Mexican happiness to the drudgery and death of a cab-horse in London, sold for a mere handful of dollars—ill-treated by the American trader even from the moment of sale; the man who sold him would have cut ' the gringo's throat but that the dollars kept him quiet, as they have rendered dumb priests, ministers of State, bishops and merchants, princes and peasants, and have closed the mouths of three parts of mankind, making them silent complices in all the villainies they see and hate and still dare not denounce.'

It is something sordid and mean that is the matter with the world, nothing great and tragic. The revolutionary Betterton was quite wrong, if amusing, in calling Queen Victoria ' Agrippina,' with his ' Pause, brutal and licentious old queen, and think, if you have time to think in the wild orgies of your bestial career.' Nevertheless, it is with the Bettertons that Cunninghame Graham has taken his stand, with the Smiths rather than with the Smythes, with the sans-culottes and the collarless. Not that he does not live the life of an aristocrat all the while. If he shouts in the square, he also rides in the park. Among the Reds, he is not truly of them. Out of aristocrats you can make the most dangerous revolutionaries. Their metal is better tempered. And aristocrats often become revolutionaries through loathing of parvenus and parvenu culture. That was what was the matter with Tolstoy—he had a true aristocratic hate of the bourgeois and of upstart officialdom. His hate greatly helped to bring down to

ruin the Russia of his day. Cunninghame Graham's hate has not been without effect in prevailing against our life.

Russia, however, was not a hypocritical nation. The Russians were and are unashamed. England and America are always 'getting better,' 'progressing,' 'raising the banner of civilisation,' 'building the new Jerusalem,' 'making a land "for heroes to dwell in,"' obtaining for the poor 'rare and refreshing fruit,' 'shouldering our great responsibilities,' 'not standing to one side when any great benefit to humanity is at stake.' Poor and rich alike get drunk with the same words. Political and religious revivals, equally unpractical in effect, sweep the country. They even sway the Reds. Anarchists and Revolutionaries get laughed at, and that finishes them—they laugh too.

Cunninghame Graham's ever-persisting wit and humour tell of the myriad-fold complex currents of the mind of the Anglo-Saxon and the Scot. We stand apart from other nations because of this, and other nations fail to discern our probable lines of national conduct. Graham's work itself, in all its brilliance and cosmopolitan interest, is probably for the most part quite untranslatable into foreign languages. The man who makes the fourth Magus arrive at Golgotha on horseback, having distributed alms all the way for thirty-three years, is the same who seems to gloat on the brutal-minded McKechnie referring to the Madonna which the Greeks prayed to as a 'bitch'; the same who affects the cynicism of the Chihuahueno who has his personal code—'Amongst soldiers and with prostitutes

all compliments are held excused '; the same who in a nobly sardonic vein describes the passing of William Morris with the north-west wind.

Perhaps, however, a small, uncollected fragment of writing may provide a true key to the man's belief. The excrescences of a writer and traveller may be overlooked in favour of what seems essential.

Several years before the war, the Editor of the *English Review* wrote an editorial on ' The Coming of Smith,' and Cunninghame Graham replied. It was the time of the Liberal wave in England, and the battle of the Budget. Mr. Austin Harrison saw the triumph of the common man, and hailed him as Smith:

> ' Smith has always been a good fellow. . . . In the old days of princely wars, Smith was a bowman, a stout fighter, a sheep-stealer, who laid down his life as carelessly for a Frenchman as he did for a stolen lamb. His husbandry became the joy and pride of England. He was a good merchant, a good tippler, a good roysterer. Born the first archer, he became the first sailor, the first explorer, the first gentleman, and incidentally, or possibly derivatively—though Smith had not conscious knowledge of it—some Englishmen became the first writers in the modern world. . . . Smith has done well both for himself and his country . . . plain, blunt, honest Smith, has become a law unto the civilised world and the greatest name in history. . . . For Smith the law of England was evolved. It was Smith who created what is known as the " English gentry," and hewed and toiled for them. Out of Smith there have come our insularity, our Puritanism, our love of fair-play, our phlegm, our individualism, our cant, our ignorance, our pugnaciousness, our common sense, our hearts and ships of oak. Out of Smith there has come London; there has come the silk hat; there has

come the British Empire. . . . The equations of men are equalising. Such is the prime lesson of America, of the growing peoples in the New World generally. The office-boy of to-day may be the millionaire of to-morrow. It is no longer birth, privilege, nepotism, aristocratic power and tradition which can make a man powerful to-day, but the genius of individual success. And we see it in all trades and professions, even in literature. A couple of decades ago the 'Varsities gave the intellectual tone to England; they were the supreme tribunal of thought and culture. . . . The movements of to-day are not headed by University men. . . . Lord St. Ives may say of himself, " Egad, there's only one St. Ives," but Smith will retort, " Aye, aye, but there are ten million Smiths." . . . Smith will progress. Smith will endure. Smith is the expression of the twentieth century.'

To which Cunninghame Graham replied:

' In your spirited pentathlum of Smith in Excelsis you leave out all mention of his elder brother Smythe. It is, I think, Smythe who has arrived, not poor Smith. Smith indeed, as you say, was a good archer; but Smythe, from the very first, drew a far longer bow than his younger brother. There was, of course, a family likeness between the two, but it was only from the teeth, outside. During the whole course of the history of the illustrious kinsman, Smythe has himself served heir to his brother's virtues. Thus, as I have said, though Smith clave the hazel wand at fourscore yards with his clothyard shaft, it was Smythe who received the prize, owing to the grace with which he picked up his brother's arrow and presented it, with a bow, to the Lord of the Manor. . . . Smith was always a proper, tall fellow of his hands, from the beginning of recorded time, as Smythe would put it. Smith was a Lollard before the Lord. He listened to the preaching of John Ball; he marched with Wat Tyler to London Stone. When Sir William treacherously slew his leader, Smith

dispersed, and Smythe came forward and professed himself an ardent and an ancient Liberal, and duly received his reward. Smith fought at Crecy in his shirt, for the reason that Froissart sets forth. He faced the French steel-clad chivalry at Poitiers; he followed the fifth Harry at Agincourt. What did he get by it all? Nothing but a crown a week, after he was sixty. Smythe became an alderman of the City of London and a burgess of Westminster (on the Progressive ticket) though he had always stayed at home. Smith (as you say) toiled and moiled for the British gentry; but it was Smythe who degraded both the class and himself by bowing down to his own handiwork in the hope of becoming a peer. Out of Smith came London. He dug the clay; he burnt the bricks; he built the palaces; he made the drains and the Houses of Parliament. Smythe, of course, refrained from ennobling toil. He let his brother make himself noble by it; but all the time his brother worked, Smythe organised the Progressive vote, and in due time rode into power, when he had persuaded his brother to vote for him. Smith created London, and then Smythe, not to be behindhand, created the silk hat. . . .

'You say the personal equation, as between man and man, is levelling up, and that the reason is the power of capital. If that is so, the levelling up can only be as between Smythe and Smythe, for Smith has got no capital but his two hands. In Spain and Russia, you aver, Perez and Ivanovitch cannot read and write, and therefore have no say. That for the present is the case; but, on the other hand, they have not pledged their future for a little liberty to-day, as Smythe has done, in his poor brother's name. Smythe can indeed post off a coupon for a new tooth-brush or a Coronation pea. He has a garden where the pea can grow, and a neat dressing-room in which to brush his teeth. In the slums, where Smith lives, there are no gardens. All the soil he owns is underneath his nails, and those who rise before the dawn to work have little time

to waste for tooth-brushes. Let Smythe, in God's name, brush away the censorship of plays, call out for art, read what he wishes, and eat his supper after the theatre at any hour he likes. Smith has scant time for reading, most probably has never heard there is a Censor, and as to suppers, has little need of them, as he is generally abed by nine o'clock, so as to rise by five and be out again to work. You say the crying need of Smith is for the passing of the Veto Bill. That may, of course, be of some interest to his brother Smythe. What Smith most wants, one might suppose, are shorter hours of work, more food of better quality, and above all, to get Smythe off his back. In fact, in England, Smith really goes invisible. No one knows what he actually is like, for his sharp brother masquerades in his resemblance, calling for things he wants himself, under the name of Smith.'

And to this may be added the following words in 'Cruz Alta':

'Failure alone is interesting. Successful generals with their hands scarce dry from the blood of half-armed foes; financiers, politicians; those who rise, authors whose works run to a dozen editions in a year; the men who go to the Colonies with or without the indispensable half-crown and come back rich—to these we give our greetings in the market-place; we make them knights, marking the children with the father's bourgeois brand; we marvel at their fortune for a brief space, and make them doctors of civil law, exposing them during the process to be insulted by our undergraduates; then they drop out of recollection and become uninteresting, as nature formed their race. . . . The world is to the unimaginative, for them are honours, titles, rank and ample waistbands. . . .'

In that, as far as a reader discerns, lies the credo of Robert Bontine Cunninghame Graham. And with that

written in brass one might leave him, gazing from the time in which he lived. But there's something left over, and that is the adventurous knight on the mettlesome horse, riding about the world, tilting at windmills, protecting the fallen virgins, though unable to cut off the heads of the ogres who possess them, perhaps in his perverse way not willing to—but always ready to dismount at an inn and tell you what the fallen ladies looked like—he has a rare eye for them, even to the hairs peeping through the meshes of their stockings. He'll speak a stout word for them ever and tell their stories as far as he can. But it is a wrench upon his sympathies—' Ouf! It has cost me a good sigh to tell you this. . . . Les femmes, les femmes, ça vous abiment un homme.'

In one of his prefaces he says: ' Who that would strip his clothes off and walk down Piccadilly even if the day were warm (the police all drunk or absent) without some hesitation and an announcement of his purpose. . . .' That is what Cunninghame Graham intended to do in his books, strip before the public eye; and he made excellent preliminary speeches. And he did undress. It was not to bathe in the Serpentine nor yet to exhibit God's handiwork, but just to equalise himself even with the lowest of the low—*foi d'un aristocrat, foi d'un sans-culotte.*

VI

Jack London

'How strange!' exclaimed Alexander Kuprin in 1911. 'America has produced a new genius; giftless America, the land of the dollar, has given us a new writer.' But is it not stranger still that gifted Russia, in the period from 1911 to 1924, has produced no new writers, has indeed given the world nothing but her sighs. America has brought forth Eugene O'Neill, Vachel Lindsay, Carl Sandburg, Sinclair Lewis, Hergesheimer, but Russia remains silent. America has many authentic voices, but Russia has to repose on her great past, her Dostoievsky, her Gogol, her Turgeniev, her erring Tolstoy. It is easier for a great people to express its genius in a state of comfort such as obtains in America than when its life-blood is flowing away in civil struggle.

Jack London has his counterpart in foreign literature; he was America's Maxim Gorky, he was her H. G. Wells; not so much of a tramp as Gorky, not so much of a suburban child as H. G. Wells; but these were his types. He was a voice out of the depths, out of the unknown life of the people. His struggle from illiteracy to self-expression was an Herculean one. It is told in his 'Martin Eden,' which is his best human study. Deck hand, beachcomber, gold-seeker, bar-room supporter and lounger, he tells how he purified his soul and his language, how he used his own ambition and how he used the public libraries and the bright inspiration of Californian girls, and determined to break

through the crust which divides nether from upper world in modern civilisation.

Gorky has said the worst work he ever did was in a bakery in Kazan. Jack London's worst was in an hotel laundry—'Out on the broad verandahs of the hotel men and women, in cool white, sipped iced drinks and kept their circulation down. But in the laundry the air was sizzling. The huge stove roared red hot and white while the irons moving over the damp cloth sent up clouds of steam.'

The laundry drove him to drink, and drink drove him back to sea, and a restless ambition drove him from the sea back again to civilisation and public libraries and educated people. Then he dropped his 'I weres,' drank root beer instead of rum, gave up smoking, devoured the works of Herbert Spencer, and wrote three thousand words a day of unsaleable copy for newspapers and magazines. He failed of success, not through lack of grammar, but because of 'nasty' subjects and unhappy endings, and because editors had no vision of his capabilities. He learned to share the common bitterness of the young about editors—'The chief qualification of ninety per cent. of all editors is failure.' He wrote, 'They have failed as writers. Don't think they prefer the drudgery of the desk and the slavery to their circulation and to the business manager to the joy of writing. They have tried to write and have failed. Every portal to success in literature is guarded by those watch-dogs, the failures in literature. . . . If I fail as a writer I shall have proved for editorship.' Not, of course, a true judgment, but possessing some mordant

truth. But there never were so many truly able editors as in Jack London's day.

Jack London was a feminine man, not what is called a ' man's man.' He became exalted in his writing, at times nearing an hysteria more natural to the female than to the male. The women characters in his books voice his own thoughts about himself. The Oakland shop-girl saw in Big Bill Roberts the inexpressible:

' She saw in him deeps and intensities, all the magic connotations of temperament, the glimmer and hint of rages profound, bleakness as cold and far as the stars, savagery as keen as a wolf's and clean as a stallion's, wrath as implacable as a destroying angel's, and youth that was fire and life beyond time and place. She was awed and fascinated, with the hunger of woman bridging the vastness to him, daring to love him with arms and breast that ached to him, murmuring to herself and through all the halls of her soul, ' You dear, you dear!" '

This of Big Bill Roberts, the champion heavyweight, who murdered English so outrageously—a very sweaty piece, a heavy lump, of Adams' clay. It is a certain sort of woman in the presence of her lover. London loved himself. It is London, hysterically admiring London.

Again, in ' Martin Eden': ' He was as a harp; all life that he had known, and that was his consciousness, was the strings; and the flood of music was a wind that poured against these strings and set them vibrating with memories and dreams. He did not merely feel. Sensation invested itself in form and colour and radiance, and what his imagination dared it objectified in some

sublimated and magic way. Past, present, and future mingled; and he went on oscillating across the broad, warm world, through his adventure and noble deeds, to Her—aye, and with her, winning her, his arm about her, and carrying her on in flight through the empery of his mind.'

To the reticent Englishman and self-restrained New Englander there is something almost indelicate in his emotional extravagances. They look at him as they do at a loud talker. It is not merely that he belonged to the rude, rough West. It is not simply the spirit of the guffawing indiscreet. But his glands swelled as he excited himself. Each new paragraph intoxicated him to the indiscretion of his next new paragraph. He slobbered, he raved, he hurt his hand on the bar-room table. The strange thing is that his words under these circumstances were neither drivel nor ravings. He made emotional discoveries of new continents; at times he flared up with the philosophical genius of a Coleridge.

A strange, outlandish human being, and yet acceptable. His books are neither burned nor do they collect dust. He is accepted in Russia, England, Germany; he is greatly read in France. He has success because he is so remarkable. In European libraries he seems unique. I suppose, however, that in California he was less remarkable than elsewhere. He was louder than California, but he intuitively understood the spirit of California and gave it voice; also intuitively, like a woman, understood America through California and the West, and spoke for her. He pronounced a clear

ideal, a Californian ideal, an American ideal, the ideal of a clean straight man, every bit *white*, a St. Paul or Jesus Christ in the boxing ring with all the force of a Jack Johnson, a man of the people, rough of word but sure of heart, a broad liberal reader, but speaking a generous slang, clear of eye, shrewd in judgment, a captain of men, a man always out for right, yet ready to play everybody's game and beat them at it.

'Burning Daylight,' 'The Valley of the Moon,' and 'Martin Eden' all endeavour to present in the flesh the American ideal, the perfect warrior which every American in arms (and who is not) would wish to be.

Daylight, the Klondyke King, the super-animal who uses up two Indians a day, a man with a hunch for hidden gold, for the 'Mother lore,' a man who can lift and swing nine hundred pounds, who can throw the other husky pioneers of Alaska about like skittles, is a man who is also a divine gambler—'I'd gamble all the way from Creation to the Day of Judgment,' says he. 'I'd gamble a golden harp against another man's halo; I'd toss for pennies on the front steps of the New Jerusalem, or set up a faro lay-out just outside the Pearly Gates; but I'll be everlastingly damned if I'll gamble on love.' 'Damned in any case,' says the European reader, and smiles laconically. Such men as Burning Daylight do not exist, but the brag exists, the 'talking big' exists. It is not the spirit of New England. Jack London is a foreigner in Boston. But it is the desire of California, it is the voice of the State of Hell-roaring Johnson. It is an exaggeration of the spirit of America as a whole, an exaggeration and a burlesque,

but it nevertheless holds or held an attention nation-wide.

Jack London had little patience with conventional America, or with the mind of the roller-top desk variety. He professed to be a Socialist, but he would have loathed equally both Lenin and Sidney Webb. He was 'Yours for the Revolution.' Under the influence of champagne he is said to have been a most eloquent talker about the state of the masses. I think in reality he believed more in life itself than in theories. He wanted his brothers and sisters to have more life. An immense gratitude surged in his own bosom, not gratitude to God, but just gratitude for his own escape from misery and drudgery, for his self-expression, for his name and fame, for his ranch, for his cattle, for his friends. His constant reference to contemporary writers in the course of his fiction is part of his expression of gratitude to the writers of books. He was enormously helped by other people's books. The business of writing no doubt conventionalised his own life not a little, but he never forgot the realities of his youth. If he brought the heroes of his stories to rather absurd conventional ends of 'love in a cottage' and being 'happy ever after,' they nevertheless always had their splendid beginnings.

The key book of his writings is the 'Call of the Wild,' in which the over-civilised and pampered St. Bernard dog proves that he has in him the supposedly glorious potentiality of becoming a wolf. In all his writings Jack London is changing dogs into wolves and wolves into dogs. In the course of it all London himself be-

comes a civilised dog, reconciled to kennel and master. But he constantly bays at men and the moon to assure them that he is wolf at heart.

The St. Bernard dog whimpering in his sleep was really dreaming of earlier incarnations of himself. London does the same whimpering for Man in ' Before Adam ' and ' Star Rover,' and indeed in many of his studies. The analytical reader may decide that these dreams mostly took place in public libraries where the author used six tickets at once. His philosophical ideas came out of books rather than out of life. Hence at times his appallingly bookish phraseology. He ' inhibits ' and ' correlates ' and ' connotates.' ' I have ten thousand august connotations,' says he. ' I am King in the Kingdom of sense. . . . I knew that I was drunk. . . . Already I was feeling the impact of whisky. . . . I struggled along heroically, my correlations breaking down, my legs tottering under me.' He likes to ' posit an idea.' How he loved the expression ' awareness,' which is not truly English, but a piece of philosophers' slang and professional vanity affected in talk by bookish dames. Fancy a dock loafer of San Francisco having an ' awareness'!

This personal literary weakness he imputed also to the heroes of his stories, and the maniacal captain of the sealer, Wolf Larsen, who trampled men to death, yet read Herbert Spencer, quoted Kipling and Milton, and did not fall asleep over Browning. Even Burning Daylight, the wild man of Alaska, was left chanting ' Tomlinson.'

That is inartistic and nauseating. One feels that much

of London's writing ought to be judged as journalism rather than as literature. He used the fictional form for self-expression, because it gave him most scope. Had he started younger and lived longer he would doubtless have refined his style and his art.

One of the best of his journalistic books is 'John Barleycorn,' a novel of personal experience and a tract against alcoholic drink. It was only published in 1913. He tells that he is voting for 'Woman's Suffrage,' being confident that only through the women's vote will 'Prohibition' be achieved. Drink, he admits, was his greatest temptation and danger all through life; he can personify it as an enemy. He did not live to see that enemy worsted in America, but if his own story be true it is not improbable that it worsted him, and that if he had not given way so much to alcoholic excess he would have been less neurotic and emotional, and he would have lived longer and written finer books.

Of him and O. Henry, Carl Sandburg wrote: 'Both were jail-birds; no speechmakers at all; speaking best with one foot on a brass rail; a beer-glass in the left hand and the right hand employed for gestures. And both were lights snuffed out . . . no warning . . . no lingering.

'Who knew the hearts of these booze-fighters?'

Was Jack London a 'booze-fighter'? If one must have recourse to American slang I prefer to call him a 'fire bug.' He set the West afire, the flames are still red in the sky.

It would be ungenerous to write words which detract from his fame. He is a living writer. His books will be

read when many that are greater works of art will be dust-collecting. He is lesser than Conrad and greater. He is possibly the chief inspiration of one of the greatest who has followed after him, Eugene O'Neill. He is a young man's writer. Between him and youth flies a living spark. He has power to animate and set moving that which is still and immature. His books are worth their place on any young man's bookshelf. He wrote, not for the crusted, the set, the finished, the aged, but for those who have in them the potentialities of new life. In the same way he wrote for the unfinished and not the finished America. He bids the eagles of the West fly on, to use Lindsay's phrase. He is a man with a bugle; an awakener, an annunciator, a wall-shatterer, a herald of dawn, a man standing on a slag-heap, sword in hand and pointing with his sword.

VII

'Dat Ole Davil Sea'

Those who write of the sea are romantics even if they do employ the realistic method. They are not realists. Defoe, Melville, Stevenson, Conrad, London, O'Neill —romantics all. They hold us spellbound with the 'shipman's tales' when we ought perhaps to be thinking of other and nearer things.

The Ancient Mariner pulls us by the sleeve and whispers in an awestruck voice: 'Listen, listen. I . . . shot the albatross!' The wedding guest may beat his breast, but he cannot get away. His Conrad holds him when he would rather be with Bennett and H. G. Wells reading the true story of the bridegroom and the bride. It is not enough to say:

> 'The bride hath paced into the hall,
> Red as a rose is she.
> Nodding their heads before her go,
> The merry minstrelsy.'

We want to know, we greedy realist readers, what she wore, who she was, what her past, who he is, how they met, how much they have, how much the merry minstrelsy is paid, how long their bliss will last. It pains us to listen to this fellow prating of life on ship, of some plague, some mutiny, some thirst—

> 'Water, water everywhere; the very boards did shrink.'

Hang it all, we do not want to be pestered by that balderdash. Ah, but we cannot get away. Make no mistake, it is not simply the clutch of the old fingers on our sleeves. The old man with the terrible eyes and

dreadful whisper holds us with a strong and subtle spell. All life may pass us by, but we must listen to his tale. His story shall be our life.

> 'I know the man that must hear me.
> To him my tale I teach,'

says the Ancient Mariner—he knows, he knows.

This is now in part the complaint of the wedding guest, after he has got away. Why do they all exaggerate when they speak of the sea? How is it the members of the crew develop such remarkable characters and come from such outlandish parts? Those Queequecks and Solomon Islanders! Those first mates of gigantic proportions and dreadful fists! Those inspired or cranky skippers! How is it that chance at sea is so top-heavy and keeps casting up sixes or ones? A ferry-boat collides with something in the fog in the harbour of the Golden Gate; a young literary fellow swimming for life with a packet of press cuttings in his pocket emerges from the fog to see, not a suburban coast or barge or buoy or other ferry-boat, but a brig under full sail, outward bound. The Captain is mad; he is homicidal; he is bound for the Polar Circle and the seals. He needs one more hand to make his crew, or he certainly had not slackened sail to lift a San Franciscan *littérateur*. But it is better to be picked up by the Sea Wolf than by Captain Ahab in quest of the White Whale.

> '"Shipmates, have ye shipped in that ship?"
> '"Yes, we have just signed the articles."
> '"Anything down there about your souls? . . . Well, morning to ye, shipmates, morning . . . did ye see anything like men going towards that ship a while ago?"

' " Yes, I thought I did see four or five men; but it was too dim to be sure."

' " Very dim, very dim. Morning to ye."'

They have signed a bargain with ' dat ole davil sea,' as Chris Christopherson so happily called her. They ' go down to the sea in ships and have their business in great waters. These see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep.' The works of the devil, too—the ' vorst dirty tricks of dat ole davil.'

I have often thought that ' Moby Dick,' written in the true Conradian manner, is yet better than any sea tale that Conrad wrote. But it does not matter. Comparisons are odious. The similarity of method is more interesting. Someone has said, ' If Conrad did not write " Moby Dick " he ought to have.' One could as well exclaim that if Coleridge had not written the ' Ancient Mariner ' he ought to have written the ' Quest of the White Whale.' The Albatross and Moby Dick are animals in the same transcendental universe which one surmises beyond the sea horizon's rim. They are myths of the sea.

The writers about the sea derive from one another and from the sea itself. He who would write a sea yarn without having been to sea must be a sort of second-rate Macduff. On the other hand, all who tell stories have the tradition, the style. Even Homer telling the Odyssey is unoriginal to that extent. The blind harper knows the lost stories and legends of time before him, and, better than that, he knows the mood, the style of all stories about the sea.

The greatest master of that mood and style in our day

is no doubt Conrad. Life passes while he tells you his tale. He is content; he will hold you to the end.

With interminable interpolations, confidences, and asides, Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick' is not so much the consummation of this style as the exhaustion of it. Conrad's 'Lord Jim' has less in it but is more perfect.

Sometimes Conrad tells his tale himself, as from his own mouth; other times he projects a 'Captain Marlow,' who out-Conrads Conrad. Marlow lights his pipe, relights his pipe, gets it going, lights his cheroot, relights his cheroot, while you wait in the smoke and cannot get away. There are long, dramatic, undramatic pauses wherein the landlubber, bemused awhile, may fancy himself hunting some most elusive timorous deer, in fact the human soul, stalking, stalking, stalking, lying so still, while the leader of the party with warning finger keeps the rest flat, down on their bellies, with stilled attentiveness. You have seen the human soul, you have seen your quarry full-eyed, basking in innocence on a hillside by your home. No, no. Come away. Take ship to the Indian and Pacific Oceans. You are too near. We shall arrive—but by-and-by; it is a long story.

Conrad has this merit—in being very little interested in *you*. You may not go from him; that is the extent of his interest. Jack London ever and anon takes up a megaphone to emphasize some everlasting mercy or unforgivable sin. Conrad uses the microphone—he whispers his tragic details so laconically that you have to have them repeated. He will repeat in a moment: that is part of his artifice. He will make you forget what

he told you and hark back to get the fact again. The man with the pipe puffs away, telling his yarn between broken sentences, ever heightening your suspense with an unconcerned leisureliness. He will verify every wave in the ocean, take it out of its place, show you its number, and put it carefully back. He holds the inventory of Davy Jones's locker in his hand. Shakespeare talks vaguely of great ships at the bottom of the sea, but Captain Marlow knows their names and has a sigh for each. Ah, well, you cannot share his feelings, but they are precious, and beat your breast as you may, you must indulge him. He knows also the souls of all seafaring men. The sea shall give up its dead, and each man as he rises shall be carefully considered. Again, he knows the language of atmosphere and colour. In this I will say, when I have torn myself away and got home and stand apart, he is greater than in his knowledge of men. I do not know his secret. He has learned something from books which the sea did not tell him. In the domain of the purely descriptive he is a magician. He has a moving descriptive style. The Pole knows our language. Great words rise to him at great moments. Images rise to his mind unbidden, often daring images, sometimes questionable images, but vitally suggestive. He takes you from here and now and in a trice puts you there and then. It is not a unique literary quality, but he has it in a high degree. Many clever writers have it—many ought to have it and have not.

The sea is an Anglo-Saxon cult in literature. Other races have their sea stories, but with us sea stories are a passion. Curious, is it not, that a country without

a sea coast produced Conrad? There is, however, little of the Pole about him. His inspiration is from France and England. There is nothing Slav about his 'Under Western Eyes.' He is a clever psychologist, but the Slavs have no exclusive rights in psychology, and Conrad's method is not that of Dostoievsky or of Chekhoff or of Andreyieff. You are indeed nearer to the stories of Edgar Allan Poe when reading Joseph Conrad. 'The Descent into the Maelstrom,' slowed down by the ultra-rapid lens, as they say in cinema parlance, would produce something not unlike a Conrad story.

The best book of Conrad's is 'The Nigger of the Narcissus' (and that was his own view too), the best sea story of Jack London's is 'The Cruise of the *Elsinore*,' and the best play of Eugene O'Neill is 'Anna Christie.'

'Lord Jim' is in a way a *chef d'œuvre*, but it breaks down in the Patusan part. No one cares what happens in Batavia, 'East of Suez,' 'Where the Pavement Ends,' and in Borneo. A fine mind is wasted on 'Almayer's Folly.'

Jack London is rawer than Conrad; less cooked, less finished and embellished and possessed perhaps of more literary vitamines. Wholly inferior as an artist, he nevertheless presented life with inspirational power. There is not so much of the 'old man' about him. He is a younger mariner, jollying you into a public-house. You drink with him as he tells you his yarn. He at least treats you to no post-mortem examinations. He may resurrect the 'seafaring man with one leg,' but

he will not kill him again. The wedding guest may never for a moment forget he is due at a wedding somewhere, but London has sufficient power to say, 'Curse the wedding; come along!'

Jack London gave an inspiration; Eugene O'Neill caught it and dramatised. He got ideas from Conrad: thus, to a certain extent, the 'Emperor Jones' is a coloured 'Lord Jim.' The Patusan adventure is an inferior part of Conrad's story, but it is a good film drama and might well cover two thousand lurid metres. And the 'Emperor Jones' is more of a film drama. But these are small matters. O'Neill has disenchanted the sea yarn to the extent of limiting it to three hours at a theatre. An actor himself, I have heard he was once billed to play in a stage version of Jack London's 'Burning Daylight.' Mr. Daylight was a sort of hairy ape, and a good deal of his terrific quality was dramatised in the character of 'Yank.' O'Neill of course had been to sea himself, shipped evidently as a stoker or fireman on tramps faring to the Indies and South America; he shot his albatross, so to speak, and then unfolded his 'Moon of the Caribees,' 'Hairy Ape,' 'Emperor Jones,' and the rest. He dramatised the ways of an appalling 'white trash.' He went ahead of Conrad as a young man can go ahead of an old man if he will. He is post-war; Conrad pre-war. 'They did for yer right enough, Jonesy me lad! Dead as a bloater. Where's yer 'igh an' mighty airs now, yer bloomin' Majesty? . . . Gawd blimey, but yer died in the 'eight o' style, any'ow!'

O'Neill holds his audience because we who have been in barrack room, square, transport, trench, hospital,

recognise one thing which half-killed us—namely, the *langwidge*, that appalling English-as-she-is-spoke which poured incessantly into the ears.

Equally with the old seaman of Coleridge, O'Neill may claim he knows the man who *must* hear him. Is he not master of a whole series of degraded dialects of our tongue—Cockney, New Yorker, Nigger, Irish, Swedish American, Middle-West, and what not! None comes amiss; he turns them on separately or all together when he chooses.

In his characterisation he is nearer to 'Moby' Dick and the rest. His crews come from the ends of the earth, and there is generally someone among them of such homicidal violence that one's sympathetic fear is awakened in their presence—'hard guys.' Burke the Irishman in 'Anna Christie' is only outdone by the Hairy Ape himself. 'He packa da wallop I tella you.' His strong men are stokers.

'Gee, you're some strong, all right.'

'It's no lie, and why shouldn't I be with me shovelling a million tons of coal in the stokeholds of ships since I was a lad only.'

So speaks Burke in 'Anna Christie.' The appalling 'Yank' who only finds his equal in a gorilla is stoker also. Somehow these hardly seem to correspond to the appearance of firemen and stokers as one sees them brought up before the Immigration officer upon entering a harbour. But that does not matter. The great thing is to impress, to hold. In the old days they told of men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders; to-day of hairy apes in the stokehold. Alas, that oil-

driven engines should begin to deprive the artist of a type. As regards the stokehold of a transatlantic liner the Hairy Ape scene is already an anachronism.

The value of the Hairy Ape, however, lies not in its verisimilitude but in the presentation of a truth of to-day—that the bottom dogs of our industrial civilisation are degraded to a point when they cease to be human beings. They do not need to have developed great animal strength to resemble apes. It is a condition of mind and soul that qualifies for ape-hood, for Yank is mad—he is exaggerated in unessentials; but there were many Yanks made visible in the Army, when the war emptied mines and prisons and factories into the ranks.

But now I have myself been held too long by these Ancient Mariners and 'dat ole davil sea.' Others are waiting for me somewhere. Good-bye, old men of the sea! Yesterday there was a wedding somewhere, and I was bidden. We have talked through the night, Captain Marlow, and the dawn light shows up mercilessly our liqueur glasses and ends of cigars. Well, 'morning to ye, morning!'

VIII

Joseph Hergesheimer

Our literature has greatly benefited by foreign gifts. England owes much to Conrad, Belloc, and Zangwill, and America to Dreiser, Hergesheimer, Sandburg, and others. Hergesheimer would hotly deny that he is anything else than American. But he is not American as Sinclair Lewis, nor could he be English like H. G. Wells. His gift is foreign, European, continental. In our literature he is nearest to Conrad, but then Conrad was Polish and derived his cultural inspiration from the continent of Europe. In European literature generally Hergesheimer seems nearest to Ibsen, the Ibsen of 'Hedda Gabler,' 'The Wild Duck,' and 'John Gabriel Borkman.'

He must have been a student and admirer of Conrad. His work shows that Conrad, besides being a wonderful writer, really established a new tradition in writing, his novels being now classical examples. Conrad has a literary offspring. One may say, for example, that had there been no Conrad there had been no H. M. Tomlinson. And if there had been no Conrad, Hergesheimer would have been different; he would, I imagine, have been less subtle in his characterisation and less ambitious in his impressionisms.

Hergesheimer is, in any case, more derivative. Both he and Conrad were reading men, but Conrad had also lived considerably. Conrad's travels and his life on the sea gave him the raw material of his novels. His wide European reading helped him merely in technique. His

books are fictionalised travel experiences; his men and women were seen by him first and treated by his mind much later. There is a faithfulness in detail in the description of Conrad's characters which reminds one of a naturalist's work. But Hergesheimer has not lived so much. He does not quarry in his life-experience. His characters are imagined; they derive from a mind constantly fed from other books. Therefore his detail is not so faithful; he is not remembering, he is supplying, and if he gives sometimes staggering petty details in the Conradian manner, it is not for verity's sake, but just for the sake of verisimilitude.

This in Hergesheimer has made his novels much more readable than those of Conrad, more easily read, enjoyed, appreciated. Works of imagination are in general more easily read than works reflecting life itself. This is because understanding from reading is in itself a continual use of the imagination. When the writer is imagining and the reader is imagining, less effort is required from the reader. He quickly enjoys himself in the world of make-believe. But to understand real life-experience transcribed into a book is almost as difficult as living itself.

Life is more complicated than imagined life. And in matter of detail the imagination is almost always wrong. The more faithful you are in the study of life the more unimaginable do you realise its details to be.

But that does not imply that purely imaginative writers are wrong. Their function is not realism, or even pseudo-realism, but the presentation of problems or pictures of imaginary life in which the reader finds

likenesses in his own experience, likenesses which evoke sympathy or light a way, which liberate his mind from stagnancy or gloom, which stimulate his will or relieve his conscience. The commonest function is to liberate the mind from the colourlessness of everyday life. It is a useful but not a high function, as may be realised from the examples of the ordinary cinema drama. This is the function of Hergesheimer as an imaginative artist, and in it he excels. He is a first-class imaginative writer on a low plane.

He is gifted, and might conceivably have contributed something to a higher form of imaginative literature, but he found what was profitable and popular and has kept to that. He has allowed himself to be his public's provider, and for that reason his work cannot long outlive him, for the need of a public changes with every succeeding turn of the wheel of civilisation. His imaginary types of men and women are called into being by the appetite of his public. Hence Hergesheimer's only value beyond the pleasure he gives to his day and generation lies in the fact that his work remains as in part a reflection of the demands of the morbid society in which we live.

For that reason the detached critic is thrown into a negative attitude. These men and women in Hergesheimer's novels do not correspond. God did not make them, and therefore one is impatient. The world if peopled by them only would be a madhouse and intolerable. These neurasthenical but terribly strong men, these as neurasthenical libidinous women! His men are all alligators; his women all alligator pears.

Turn from Hergesheimer to Dickens, and you realise the difference in the dish set before the public. Or turn from the society of Hergesheimer's characters to the society of one's friends and acquaintances in the actual world! No, Hergesheimer is dictated to by a morbid mind which must have this sort of fare.

It seems now to be popular to make men drink very heavily in novels. Is that because of Prohibition—because of a mental complex in the reader, brought about by the thought, 'I am not allowed to drink'? In modern English novels as compared with American, the men and women portrayed are remarkably abstemious. But then the English do not think about drink. If they want it they have it. But in Hergesheimer it has again become a mark of manhood to drink prodigiously. In the good old days when men were more men than they are now, they drank a liquor which was more potent than any we have now, and drank it much more copiously. Hence Balisand.

But not to go back to the War of Independence, the real he-man of the Hergesheimer novel of our days is equal to legend in his bibulousness. Govett Bradier in the days before the war could drink three bottles of brandy in a night and then drive a car, and it was incomparably stronger brandy than what was provided for him in Mexico after the war. In truth, in life, the man who could drink three bottles of strong brandy and not be dead drunk does not exist. But it pleases the reader to think of him doing it and driving a car after it. It straightens one's spine to think of such a man. The same Govett Bradier, fever-stricken and

broken, drinks down a bottle of inferior post-war brandy as a cocktail before going to have dinner with his lady friend. He got a little unsteadied by this, but *time was when* . . . Time was when three bottles would not have made as much difference.

These three-bottle men have great reserves of life and passion, unbroken, almost unbreakable will. Essentially they are untameable. They are enigmatical and dangerous. Sexually they are predatory. Among women they inspire fear, and they are not easily mated. The redoubtable Black Penny takes his bride in the toolshed. She is the right woman for him, but she must be seized like an object of prey.

The Hergesheimer women, too, do not want to be wooed, but to be taken. They are curious women. If you are ready to take them they are as over-ripe fruit. You do not need to shake, they are in your hands. But if you will court them they will fight.

A world, or an America, half-peopled by the women of Hergesheimer's novels would surely result in an increase in murder, racial suicide, and melancholia. It would be ' a hell of a place, and beautiful. And dangerous,' to use Herghesheimer's words in another connection. But this hellish world does exist; it is the world of his readers' minds. Decent life is transcribed mentally in the indecent. Thus, in a Hergesheimer novel, in the early nineteenth century, the girls of Salem leave their garters loose, so as to get off with the men. They are to be taken, not wooed, these ' good armfuls '—get on with it, ye men!

Mrs. Corew was ' dangerously potential as though she

were moulded from a perfumed nitro-glycerin. A smile in which tenderness was mocked by irony moved the set scarlet of her lips. . . .'

Mrs. Corew was a lady, but the description reads like the impression by a shy, startled youth of a woman seen in a café.

But she only looks like this when you withdraw from the idea of taking her. When she is happier with a man her knees approach his invitingly.

She has the aspect of a Zoo tiger, looking villainously from the slants of her eyes at the safe public the other side of the wire, but ready to pounce on the meat when it comes. The ordinary man is in an awkward position with this type—Don't talk to me about your golf-handicap: I want you. Don't talk to me of oil, of companies, of human responsibility, of your wealth, of the pearls you will buy for me. You know what I want. That and that only.

And after that, what?

No. Hergesheimer is not wrong. He is not exploring the world; he is exploring the reader's mind. The devitalised love the red meat they cannot eat. The over-civilised love these jungle rallies. In the mind we go back and rove the jungle. You take the woman if you want to go on. You can flog her or kill her and take another. If you are a woman reader you take the man, you can enslave him in your cave, perhaps kill him and go out in the jungle and get another. It is jolly sport. A bridge is made for the Napoleonic drummer to get into a satisfactory land of dreams. And a bridge for the somewhat stultified if pampered

woman of the Women's Clubs to get to her land of dreams.

The images flood past in the mind like the rapid pictures of the cinema, and Herghesheimer's technique, his method and style, are adequate and harmonious. He touched the ' Came the Dawn ' style of cinema captions with a certain genius. His magniloquence rolls on like a gilded coach.

But the critic seems ungrateful. The fact remains that Hergesheimer is one of the important writers of his era. He is not impossible even for the most cultured; nor is he childish to the most intellectual. His age speaks through him clearly, and if for that reason alone he is a stimulating writer. But also he can use his wild imaginary types to make a powerful story. He is a very able teller of stories. His gifts may have been commercialised, but he has the advantage of being always better than his writing. It is more interesting to be conducted through the Chamber of Horrors by a man of intelligence than by an ordinary guide. His controlled style of writing flickers every now and then with scintillations of great literary power. Divorced from his ' magazine readers ' he might have produced work as lasting in literary power as Conrad's ' Lord Jim,' and ' The Nigger of the Narcissus.' He had the gift.

His best book really is ' Linda Condon ': it is better written, more natural and more real than his ' best sellers.' It is a volume of luxurious neurasthenia, and its real subject is ' What chance has the soul in America?' Curiously enough, it seems to be an offset against the

sexual materialism of Hergesheimer's other novels, for it contains a long study of platonic love in a positive mood, and a very haunting love-study of a woman unpossessed. Probably one is nearer to Hergesheimer himself in this novel than in the others. He is not himself a three-bottle man; but his soul has been thirsty.

IX

Rudyard Kipling

Our uncrowned kings of letters have generally been greater than our crowned. Kipling never was laureate, but he wore the invisible laurel. He has been our most representative literary man during the twentieth century. Carlyle, Tennyson, Kipling seem in true sequence, voices of England heard not by ourselves alone, but by the peoples of the Empire and the world.

If one were directing a foreigner as to which author to study to gain a knowledge of England, it would not be good advice to send him to Dickens so excellent in his day, nor to Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Shaw so brilliant and unusual just yesterday, nor to Mr. Wells who oversteps his time to be the representative man of an illusory to-morrow. It is Rudyard Kipling that we should place in his hands, Rudyard Kipling; ' The Explorer,' his ' Day's Work,' his ' Stalky,' his ' Diversity of Creatures,' his ' If.'

In these works he is as representative of us as Jack London was of the United States. And Kipling is more precious to us than Jack London to America, for he is a much greater artist. The author of ' Kim,' and of the ' Jungle Books,' and of such a story as that entitled ' ·007,' or of such a poem as ' The Long Trail,' finds his place among the greatest literary artists of his day; as clever in the use of words as Bennett, as quick in imaginative conception as Barrie. It is true he has never been a worker in a literary workshop; no chaser and jeweller, no polisher of phrases, no gem-mounter.

He has simply been in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and everything has come to him by intuition—an artist of verve and élan, of dramatic emotional force.

One must, of course, grant that in one respect he is somewhat out of date; the trappings of the Army he immortalised have changed, he

> ' Used to belong to the Army once,
> Red little dead little Army once.'

But there is much in his famous ' Barrack-Room Ballads ' and in his ' Soldiers Three ' which will be true of our British Army for all time. Fuzzy-Wuzzy breaking the British Square will need a footnote in time to come, but ' We ain't no thin red 'eroes, but we ain't no blackguards too ' will not. The B.E.F. of the Great War was a phenomenon entirely new in our history, yet in a curious way no one in letters showed the spirit of that force better than Kipling. The talk of the new Army was not less gaudy than that of the old. In fact, it was only when you got into barracks as a private soldier that you knew how truly the Ballads expressed the talk of the Tommies. Again, among the non-commissioned officers how many Sergeant Whatsisnames appeared, and among the officers how many Stalkys, Beetles, and McTurks.

Of course, there are many intellectuals who do not like Kipling's England; the Manchester school denies that Kipling's England is England. To the ascetic Liberal, Kipling is a sort of Mark Antony appealing to the lower instincts of the crowd. It considers Brutus to have been the better Roman, and certainly Kipling is no

Brutus. Thomas Hardy was our Brutus; Kipling is our Antony. Let it stand! We are more a nation of potential Kiplings than of potential Hardys.

Literary criticism in this country is, however, minority criticism. The intellectuals hold the field, and that is why a certain amount of legitimate fame has been denied Kipling. He was and is famous everywhere. Only he is a little less famous in literary circles than he is outside of them.

What appeals to me in Kipling apart from the epic nature of certain studies is the felicity of his phrases and his jargon. Go to the 'Song of the Banjo' and hear the twanging music of the strings throughout. The banjo veritably speaks all the time:

> 'The grandam of my grandam was the Lyre—
> O the blue below the little fisher huts.'

In Kipling more than in any other writer of our age the sound becomes an echo of the sense. In this same poem of the Banjo, with what delight do your senses remember the sound of the anchor plunging:

> 'I have sailed with Young Ulysses from the quay
> Till the anchor rumbled down on stranger shores.'

What bliss from extra sensations derived from one's own experience is to be found in such a verse as

> 'O the mutter overside, when the port-fog holds us tied
> And the sirens hoot their dread!
> When foot by foot we creep o'er the hueless viewless deep
> To the sob of the questing lead!'

It is a primitive appeal. The imitation of sounds is the making of language. Recite ' Boots ' to a foreigner, and he must know it is a song about marching.

> ' I—'ave—marched—six—weeks in 'Ell an' certify
> It—is—not—fire—devils dark or anything
> But boots—boots—boots, movin' up an' down again,
> An' there's no discharge from the war!'

The same onomatopœia is used by Kipling in his prose. It is perhaps missed by some readers who enjoy the stories entirely for their own sake, but it is nevertheless there. . . . It is on every page of that masterpiece ' The Ship that Found Herself.' ' Rigidity! Rigidity! Rigidity!' thumped the engines. ' Absolute, unvarying rigidity—rigidity!' But this trick of the trade is even more charmingly exemplified in his story of the locomotives, called ' ·007.' In that the engines speak. One always says: ' Costly—perishable—fragile—immediate—that's me!' Another, hauling out the Purple Emperor express, breaks forth into jargon:

> ' Singing michnai—ghignai—Shtingal!
> Yah! Yah! Yah!'

One would dread to hear this story read by a clever elocutionist; there are too many effects for him to bring out. But these effects are worth a good deal in themselves, if best enjoyed by those who always hear what they read. To enjoy Kipling to the full the reader should have hearing eyes. When you read with the eyes such a sentence as ' Look—look well, O wolves!' you must hear with the ears its music of the wolf-pack crying from afar.

Kipling perhaps is not much as a thinker. His sympathies are not with the thinkers so much as with the doers. He loves the machines and those who work the machines. With a breezy audacity he abandons the Gospel and frankly says he prefers the way of Martha to the way of Mary. He likes the men who start their working lives 'at grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner knives.' In that he is supremely English. Lives of adoration, or of meditation, or of philosophic doubt, have little interest. He is not at all like Browning, who could say passionately:

> 'Not on the vulgar mass called work
> Must sentence pass.'

'On work,' answers Kipling, 'and on work alone.' He does not like the Pacifists; he believes in blow for blow, sometimes in two blows for a blow. He has not much sympathy for the ''eathen in 'is blindness.' He tells Russia after the Revolution that it was the defeatists brought her down. Kipling is rarely unconventional. His calling our footballer and cricketer 'muddied oaf' and 'flannelled fool' was merely an expression of annoyance. He loves the Boy Scout movement, and would much rather have the whole of our youth scouting and guiding than hitting balls about. He does not like the 'Oh sir, yes sir, no sir' of the playing fields. But he would teach most children the copybook phrases. His most popular 'If' is like a second Polonius's advice to his son. 'Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar' implies much the same as

> 'If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue
> Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch.'

But Kipling has rendered the thought more vividly. To him it was more important than to Shakespeare. It is part of the feeling of decent-minded people in our age. We want to be familiar without being vulgar. Shakespeare was merely exemplifying the sort of thing a silly old fool like Polonius would say to his son. You shall not live by maxims but by every word that cometh out of the mouth of God!

And you cannot live by 'If' as a guide to life. It is valuable as an idealistic statement of Anglo-Saxon character. But it is perhaps a mistake to put illuminated copies of the poem in boys' bedrooms. In the old Royal Reader one used to read 'Take Care of the Minutes and the Hours will take Care of Themselves.' Then Kipling asked us to

> 'fill the unforgiving minute
> With sixty seconds' worth of distance run.'

And Arnold Bennett showed us 'How to Live on 24 Hours a Day.' There has been too much of it.

Kipling has written one or two vulgar things, 'vulgar tunes that make you cough and blow your nose, but he has lived his personal life in a certain dignity and aloofness. . . .' He has never advertised. Few photographers possess his portrait. He has shunned publicity. You will find that his name has never been used to advertise cigarettes or memory training. He would not take the money. Up till the time when his cousin Mr. Baldwin became Prime Minister of England he had not been linked in name with those who sit exalted above us. The widow of Windsor rather misunderstood

him, but he was a much greater person than Queen Victoria or any of her ministers, and has had more influence on our national life than all of them combined.

Kipling has never been a courtier, nor has he flattered governments or politicians. He has loathed the England of Whitehall, that official England

'Who would serve her God or Gordon just the same.'

Nor has he been enamoured of the average unimaginative stay-at-home townsmen, 'the street-bred people.' But he understood and praised the mercantile marine. In that, if in that alone, he was like Conrad. He has admired and sung the Empire-builders, the pioneers, the original characters, the exceptions. In the exceptional Englishman, in the Sergeant Whatsisname, he has identified the race.

The Liberals have called him 'Jingo,' but he has remained nevertheless democratic, and as much a man of the people as any Labour man. He and the late Will Crooks would have got on very well together. Strong-worded as is Kipling's contribution to our literature, and though strident his voice, one should realise a very humble, noble soul behind it all, one utterly worthy of the national affection which goes out to him.

'The tumult and the shouting dies,—
The captains and the kings depart,—
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.'

X

Robert Burns

He only lived to be thirty-seven, but he is immortal. Carlyle warned his generation in 1828 that in a hundred years it was hardly likely that another such as Burns would arise. The hundred passes, many hundreds will pass. Burns is unique. Despite his disparagers, such as Stevenson, he outlives all disparagement and shines, as it were, with even greater lustre.

Carlyle remarked in his day that Burns's works

> ' continue to be read; nay are read more and more eagerly, more and more extensively, and this not simply by literary virtuosos. The grounds of so singular and wide a popularity, which extends in a literal sense from the palace to the hut, and over all regions where the English tongue is spoken, are well worth inquiring into.'

Robert Louis Stevenson half a century later wrote his remarkable essay on Burns:

> ' Mr. Carlyle made an inimitable bust of the poet's head of gold; may I not be forgiven if my business should have more to do with the feet, which were of clay.'

A remarkable fact, however, concerning this Scottish idol with the feet said to be clay—it stands. It shows no sign of toppling over. One has an advantage in writing about a man who is dead: he is not likely to reply. Otherwise one could expect to read in Burns's collected writings some very shrewd remarks on R. L. S.

One may turn quite justifiably from the cavillings in ' Men and Books ' to the first verse of a famous poem:

'O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neighbour's fauts and folly.'

The Ayrshire farmer, walking 'in glory and in joy, behind his plough upon the mountain-side,' turning aside to spare the thistle, emblem of his proud and sturdy race, filling his broad chest with mountain air and breathing it forth again in national melody, loses nothing in the estimation of this age in that he ranted Scots songs in many a public-house, or held in his arms many an Ayrshire lass. The censoriousness which was characteristic of Stevenson's time has not grown upon us. Such a song as 'The Lass that Made the Bed to Me' may be somewhat unworthy, but in our day it would be told in stylish prose and much admired.

The secret of Burns's popularity does not, however, lie in his personal life, and not even, I think, in the greatness of his literary achievement. It lies in the fact that he was representative, that he was a voice, a voice of the voiceless. A new Scotland found herself in Burns. Burns was Scotland's great folk-poet. It does not matter that a great part of the best of Burns was not really written by him, but collected by him. That is no more important than Shakespeare's plagiarisms. Burns was merely more than himself: he was Scotland, a lad singing divinely the songs of his countryside.

Burns was a Lowlander, and yet most Burns banquets are heralded by the skirling of the pipes, men in tartan making a brave show, loping along the aisles of crowded

dinner tables, ' giein' a blaw, a blaw.' Highland Scots are as content as Lowlanders to have their ' nicht wi' Robbie Burns.' Burns was working-class and republican, and Clydeside to-day loves him as especially its own. But Court and gentry will not therefore disown him.

It is curious that no English or American poet has ever been known and loved by the broad masses of population as has Burns. A Shakespeare Day would not go like Burns Day, and as for a Milton Day, or Keats Day, or Shelley Day—it is clearly unthinkable. It is because English poetry is an adornment of society, or the expression of scholars, or the conceit of literary artists. A romantic mother may indeed croon Wordsworth and Shelley to her babies, but they will not take it from her lips. On the other hand, north of the Tweed Burns's poems are taken in with mother's milk. The earliest conscious remembrance of many a Scot must be lines from Burns said over and over again. He was hearing ' My love is like a red, red rose,' or ' My love is but a lassie yet,' or ' Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled.'

Burns's birthday song, which he composed on himself, is sung by every Scots boy about the Border and applied to himself. At least that is my experience, for I always used to think that in some way it was a poem about myself.

> ' The gossip keekit in her loof,
> Quo' she wha lives will see the proof,
> This waly boy will be nae coof,
> I think we'll ca' him Robin.'

As children we used to cross hands, as in 'Auld Lang Syne,' to sing this together. In the next age of man, in adolescence, Scots lads and lasses must owe more to Burns than to any other poet—in their courting.

> 'My heart is sair, I dare na tell
> My heart is sair for somebody.'

Then in the passionate, serious, soldier-age of man—to follow the Shakespearean classification of life—what more appealing than

> 'Now's the day and now's the hour,
> See the front o' battle lour,
> See approach proud Edward's power,—
> Chains and Slaverie!'

* * * * *

The difference between Burns and the other great poets can be well understood by comparing 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' with Gray's Elegy. There is much in common between these two poems, and yet the Burns gets home where the Elegy cannot. A famous English general may have wished he had written the Elegy, but his soldiers would not have respected him for it, or loved him as if it had been a Burns song.

'The ploughman homeward plods his weary way' may be finer, but it has not so strong an appeal as 'The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes.' Gray wrote of the busy housewife who plied her evening care and of children who ran 'to lisp their sire's return and climb his knees the envied kiss to share.' It is charming, and Burns may be inferior in diction and style, but he has a broader and more winning way:

'His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile.'

Burns was well inside his nation and speaking from inside; most other poets have been outside the nation and in an aloof way have said poetry to the nation. That is why Burns is so great. That is why he is part of the flag, so to speak.

In the bitter political quarrel now enkindling in Great Britain between the classes I have noticed a curious function of Burns. Labour leaders like Bob Smillie, for example, are saturated with Burns's poetry and can say quantities by heart. But neither laird nor labourer has exclusive right to Burns. On the contrary, Burns in many ways unites them. When a society with a number of Socialist members objects to winding up proceedings by the singing of the National Anthem, and when the other members object to singing 'Keep the Red Flag Flying' in its stead, it becomes common to compromise the situation by singing 'Auld Lang Syne.' And as Burns in a strange way is treated as a sort of saint, so one of his songs has become a sort of alternative National Anthem.

Of course, the best in Burns are his songs, which, as I have remarked, are not entirely his own. Of his other poems, 'Tam o' Shanter' was the one Burns thought his best, and Sir Walter Scott agreed. Carlyle and Arnold thought highly of 'The Jolly Beggars'; Stevenson did not, and perhaps it does not carry well in these days. 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' means much

more. Few to-day will regret that 'Holy Willie's Prayer' was ever written, as did one notable critic. Like so many poems abhorrent to the more rigid Victorian age, it grows on us in this. Of course, the more serious or satirical poems are little read by those who can with difficulty understand broad Scots. And there are even many Scots who cannot read the dialect as it ought to be read. This can be got over, and is got over, in the songs, which are more or less rendered in anglicised language. Their simplicity of diction makes the transfer easy. But as we know, the territorial contingent, the men of the Scottish South-West, know their Burns like Holy Writ. Doing business in all parts of the world, they revert in talk over their cups or with their friends to Burns, Burns's poetry and songs, with all their own gutturals and a few extra r's and burrs thrown in.

With all that is splendid in Burns it is a pity that he should be so associated with drinking. The sentimental drunkard crooning Burns over his whisky makes Burns less. Burns was indulgent to himself, but his greatness is the measure of the conquest of his self-indulgence by a man much tempted.

XI

Vachel Lindsay

America is very conventional, and grows more so. Men and women have a machine-made look, a mechanical impress. It is not simply that you may not go to business without a hat and you must shave your neck. It is not simply that your suit must be ironed every day, and that you may not go for a walk and must not carry a stick.

It is that business America has reflected itself in the American. It has given him a mind like a roll-top desk or an adding-machine or a Ford factory. It is not simply that there are highbrows in America; there are men and women with Woolworth Building brows. Standardisation, which is excellent in commercial machinery, has invaded the home, the church, the school, and has attacked flesh and blood itself.

The average American has standard clothes, standard deportment, and standard slang. He often hates it, but he cannot help it.

But as the war of the machine versus the Spirit is never finished until the Spirit has won, America is the scene of prolonged conflict. Over against the ' square-toed ' and the drab stand various prophets proclaiming anew the gospel of life and of freedom, and woe to those who build Babel again, mistaking the will of the Lord. Among these prophets of the Spirit is a prairie child, short, erect, tremendous-voiced, and Vachel Lindsay is his name.

I have before me his ' Collected Poems,' a volume to

put beside Browning and Shelley and Swinburne in your library; the song of a poet, a rebel, and a seer. It is a remarkable book.

You have before you this unusual poet's record, and you hear, at least faintly, a new voice. On our side of the water there is undoubtedly only one kindred poet, and that is Masefield. Indeed, Masefield's pre-war poetry, ' The Everlasting Mercy,' ' Dauber,' etc., would make an interesting study together with this as part of the expression of an age.

Those people were quite wrong who labelled Vachel Lindsay the Jazz Poet when he came to England. It was, of course, a natural accident. As ' Jazz Poet ' he was copy; as ' yet another monstrosity from Yankeeland ' he was copy; as the ' rough-neck,' as ' the tramp poet,' he was sufficiently picturesque for a jaded London palate. He was boomed for the wrong things.

But as one reads his poems calmly, some years after, one is convinced he would have been boomed in London even without this initial mistaken publicity. He was recognised by two such dissimilar critics as the editors of the *Spectator* and of the *London Mercury*. He pleased the late Professor Walter Raleigh at Oxford and delighted the undergraduates. At a village club near Kingsley's parsonage he will never be forgotten. He was almost as great a portent as Robert Burns, much sought after by the ladies, but the fellow of working man and ploughboy, all the same.

To the real American highbrow, however, and to the parvenu rich, Lindsay will always be a trifle unperfumed and coarse, too American, ' strident,' they will tell you.

They will tell you of various poetasters who are really better poets. In one sense the poetaster is always a better poet than the true poet. Your ' perfect poet ' is often a poetaster, seldom a prophet. But the prophet will say what is given him to say, and trust God for sound and rhythm.

> ' Would I might wake St. Francis in you all,
> Brother of birds and trees, God's troubadour,
> Blinded with weeping for the sad and poor;
> Our wealth undone, all strict Franciscan men,'

is a spiritual message before it is poetic, and it is naturally distasteful to those who have long since ceased to have ' any use ' for St. Francis.

Of course, it is true that Vachel Lindsay has a claim to our attention for more than his message. He calls to us with the sound of a trumpet. There is something of the Archangel Gabriel about this prairie-poet. A short man with a trumpet in the midst of a vast plain; he rends the sky. He brags and chants of ' Bryan, Bryan, Bryan . . . who sketched a silver Zion . . . who brought in tides of wonder of unprecedented splendour.' There is something of the Master's voice in him, too, the fisher of men, the spiritual rat-catcher who possesses an enchanted song capable of beguiling away the children of the bourgeois into a land of poetry and beauty and idealism.

He is a young people's poet, liked most in town schools and colleges and universities. They have even made a cult of dancing his poetry at Chicago, one child reciting and the rest of the class improvising a dance to the words.

In the autobiography which appears as preface to the collected poems, Lindsay tells of Miss Ruth Lovett, aged twelve, being asked to dance 'The Chinese Nightingale'—'even then a wonderful dancer, severely trained, no mere improviser pinned up in a sheet. It was not long before that infant Pavlova had grown up and had danced the poem in the spacious Mandel Hall with all the university of Chicago in her train.'

Some years ago I had the pleasure of tramping for six weeks in the Rockies with Vachel Lindsay, with knapsacks on our backs. We cooked our food on pine fires; we slept under trees or beside great rocks. We conversed on all manner of themes, and I naturally learned more of the poet in that way than I could in years studying his poems and his life. Not that one can learn everything in a six weeks' tramp. But it is a sharp test.

I do not know what the poet made of me, but I found him a real prophet and an extraordinary original. I never ceased to wonder at America producing such a strange child, a changeling from the stars.

He is a man of whom you would never say, 'Isn't it lucky he dedicated himself to poetry and did not go into business!' The reason is that quite obviously business would not have him. He would not fit into any business organisation. He could not have been used in the American machine without a lot of hammering. I seem to see a notice, 'Bent or battered coins will not work in this machine, but will be returned.'

He was bent, and he was returned. That is why originally he took to the road with a bundle of printed

poems in his pouch but ne'er a cent, as simple a soul as that of Parson Abraham Adams setting forth to sell his sermons. That is how it came about he 'sang to the farmers' for bread. That is how he learned to sing; by singing to the farmers and by singing to the flowers and to the skies.

In modern America, imagine it, he endeavoured to realise in his life something of the life and desire of St. Francis of Assisi; he trundled forth upon the broad highway, a free man, with a bundle of songs in his pocket and in infinity of song in his heart. He was in time discovered and haled forth and awarded prizes and lionised. He 'featured,' he was written up, he was classified, scheduled, accepted, put in his place among rows and rows of poets. He was criticised too; Amy Lowell identified him as the poet of the middle class.

But it does not much matter what is said of him. He remains. His poems will remain for long after he has gone.

There are few finer things in any language than the dirge of lost hopes at the end of 'Bryan, Bryan, Bryan, Bryan':

> 'Election night at midnight:
> Boy Bryan's defeat.
> Defeat of Western silver.
> Defeat of the wheat.
> Victory of letter-files
> And plutocrats in miles
> With dollar signs on their coats
> And spats on their feet.
> Victory of custodians,

Plymouth Rock,
And all that inbred landlord stock.
Victory of the neat.
Defeat of the aspen groves of Colorado valleys,
The bluebells of the Rockies,
And blue bonnets of old Texas,
By the Pittsburg alleys.
Defeat of alfalfa and the Mariposa lily.
Defeat of the Pacific and the long Mississippi.
Defeat of the young by the old and silly.
Defeat of tornadoes by the poison vats supreme.
Defeat of my boyhood, defeat of my dream.'

There is a sense of exaggerated calamity which is proper to the dirge. What four words could be more devastating than 'Defeat of the Wheat'? If the whim seizes you, compare this with 'News of Battle' in the Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers. Aytoun never felt what happened at Flodden if you compare the feeling of his poem with that of Lindsay.

Like Kipling, Lindsay has a gift for onomatopœia. You should hear his poetry; it is not enough to read it with the eyes. Thus in 'General Booth Enters Heaven' he is not writing about a Salvation Army meeting; he is reproducing it in sound, rhythm, and atmosphere, and he calls upon you to reproduce it thus when you read it. There is the curious shouting effect of those giving testimony, the groan of interjected prayer:

'Every slum had sent its half-a-score
The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)'

There is the impressive voice and strange spiritual atmosphere of some bare-headed old man whose beard is blown by the wind:

'And when Booth halted by the curb for prayer
He saw his Master through the flag-filled air.'

This piece of vivid impressionism is characteristic of Lindsay. He hears; he dramatises; he repeats his emotion in a song. Ten years ago it was thought that he had started a new school in poetry. But though he has a few pale imitators, no new poet of the type has yet appeared. It suggests the thought that men of such intensity of poetic feeling are rare. And his mode of impressionism could not be effective without a noble sincerity and a strongly emotional poetic spirit behind it.

XII

Carl Sandburg

Flowers bloom in the Desert in spring showing the woman in the earth trying to make a home. And in the deserts of stone there are poets singing.

A poet will even sing in Chicago. ' Come and show me another city with lifted head, singing, so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning. . . .' ' Hog Butcher for the world, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat ' . . . ' Go to it and remember this city fished from its depths a text: " Independent as a hog on ice." ' Even in Chicago people live; even in Chicago there are poets.

Carl Sandburg, though about the same age as Vachel Lindsay, came after him and must have obtained some inspiration from him. Both were discoveries of the Poetry Society of Chicago and owe somewhat to Harriet Monroe as impresario. Due to these two, Chicago led America in poetry for a space. Of the two, Sandburg is the more clever, though Lindsay is the greater poet. Much of what is best in Sandburg is prose set out in the form of free verse. Thus his famous lines on ' Fog ' ought to be written: ' The fog comes on little cat feet. It sits looking over harbour and city, on silent haunches, and then moves on.' To make it a poem he omits commas and some initial capitals and writes it thus:

' The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbour and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.'

This spacing is intended to convey the idea of fog. Perhaps Lindsay would have done this by a preliminary exhortation: 'Let fog be a-coming into your mind.' And by repeated suggestions of blur and mystery he would have made a poem. In truth Sandburg's poem it merely two opening sentences of an unfinished essay on fog.

And what is one to think of a poem which commences in this way?

> 'I asked the Mayor of Gary about the 12-hour day and the 7-day week.
> And the Mayor of Gary answered more workmen steal time on the job in Gary than any other place in the United States.'

This is second leader evening newspaper journalism. But to quote from another poem:

> 'Hush baby,
> It ain't what you got,
> It's what you can get away with.'

But once you get over this difficulty of definition it is possible to become fascinated by Sandburg's work. He has immortalised the rhythm and dialect of the city-bred American. You have to read him with an American accent. There is something inexpressibly ludicrous in an English university purist trying to read him aloud.

> 'Kalamazoo, you ain't in a class by yourself;
> I seen you before in lots of places.
> If you are nuts America is nuts';

or

> 'You ain't got the sense God
> Gave an oyster—it's raining—
> What you need is an umbrella';

or

> ' Why is there always a secret singing
> When a lawyer cashes in?
> Why does a hearse horse snicker
> Hauling a lawyer away?'

His poems are meant to be read nasally, ingratiatingly, and softly and slowly. In that he differs greatly from Lindsay. Lindsay is an oration; Sandburg is a conversation. But some of his poems should be slowly intoned, the way one might read the Book of Job at vespers. When you have that secret, such a poem as ' Yes, the Dead Speak to Us ' becomes superb and unforgettable.

> ' Yes, the Dead speak to us.
> This town belongs to the Dead, to the Dead and to the Wilderness.'
>
> ' Back of the clamps on a fireproof door they hold the papers of the Dead in a house here,
> And when two living men fall out, when one says the Dead spoke a Yes, and the other says the Dead spoke a No, they go then together to this house.'

He has a fine sense of gloom. One of his best poems enquires: ' What does the hangman think about when he goes home at night from work?'

At the same time he is a minstrel and goes about the country playing a guitar and singing American folk music. He has published his repertoire in a fine volume called ' The American Song-Bag.' He has such a sense for sound effects that it is surprising he has not practised them more in verse. I think his best achievement in onomatopœia is to be found in the first section of ' Slabs of the Sunburnt West.' He reproduces the

racket and hurry of a fast American train tearing across the continent in the night:

> ' Into the night, into the blanket of night,
> Into the night rain gods, the night luck gods,
> Overland goes the overland passenger train.'

These three lines in themselves seem perfect. Later in the poem he uses three words to suggest the speed of the train and the rapidly disappearing night landscapes —' civilisation, history, God.'

> ' Into the night the overland passenger train,
> And the engineer with an eye for the signal lights,
> And the porters making up beds for passengers,
> And the boys in the diner locking the ice-box—
> And six men with cigars in the buffet car mention
> " civilisation," " history," " God."'

In ' Eleventh Avenue Racket ' he imitates the strains of a cheap hurdy-gurdy:

> ' Whoop-de-doodle-de-doo.
> Hoodle-de-har-de-hum.
> Nobody home? Everybody home.
> Whoop-de-doodle-de-doo.
> Mamie Riley married Jimmy Higgins last night: Eddie Jones died of whooping cough: George Hacks got a job on the police force: the Rosenheims bought a brass bed: Lena Hart giggled at a Jackie: a push-cart man called to*may*toes, to*may*toes.
> Whoop-de-doodle-de-doo.
> Hoodle-de-har-de-hum.
> Nobody home? Everybody home.'

' Nobody home ' is an American slang expression for saying a man is brainless, rather like the English equivalent ' bats in the belfry.'

It is not surprising that with these characteristics Sandburg ranks second only to Lindsay in popularity in America. With the intellectuals he is even more popular. I think his best volume is that entitled ' Smoke and Steel,' but Miss Rebecca West's anthology of his poems seems to contain nearly everything of real value.

XIII

America as Material for Literature

The title sounds rather like a post-mortem examination. America is not material. Living America as the inspiration of living literature, it ought to be, but that is too long. Why do we write so much about America? Because America is interesting to us who write, and she is intensely interesting to humanity at large. America is a new human experiment, an experiment with humanity in a new world, and all the old world stares to try and see what is happening and what is going to happen. And if the Old World is interested as a father is interested in his son, the New World is struck at itself like a young man in the generous warmth of nascent self-expression.

To Ibsen, America was the Button-moulder's pot where the Scandinavian peasant was melted up with Tom, Dick, and Harry into someone else, a second try-out for human material. To Zangwill, borrowing the idea from Ibsen, America was 'The Melting Pot' where Jews were melted down. To Mary Antin, America was the Promised Land of the Jews, though to do her justice her famous book was written before the Bolshevik Revolution and the entry of America into a European war. To Maxim Gorky, America was the country of gleaming teeth and mirthless smiles. To the present writer, America was the living West as compared with Russia, the living East—the country of humanitarianism and all that I have called the 'Way of Martha.' To Mr. H. G. Wells, America represents

the future of civilisation; to Mr. Arnold Bennett, the future of upholstery.

America strikes the imagination of all foreigners, and everyone reacts differently, from Dickens who came to compare and complain, to Cecil Chesterton who was carried off his feet by a generous enthusiasm for her democracy. You are always thrilled or stirred when you enter the country. And if you have any imagination whatever, its power is enlarged and enhanced by the addition of a new world to the old. Every foreigner who reaches these shores for the first time is a Columbus and shares in the thrill of Columbus.

The best literature about America, however, is undoubtedly that written in America by American writers. America stirs the American writer and thinker just as much as it stirs the new arrival in America. But it is in quite a different way. America to the American is part of his faith and part of his despair. He thinks about her creatively, must think of her creatively, whereas the outsiders and arrivists think of her critically, nearly always critically if at the same time often with appreciation. Even the approbation of Wells and Bennett was critical; even the muck-raking of Roosevelt and Lincoln Steffans was creative. America, however, is so strongly conscious of her own growth and development that she resents the critical. The critical therefore strives to camouflage itself behind the pretty style of the friendship propagandists, who gaily flattered the women's clubs for dollars and smiles all through the war, half through the peace.

If you write a vivid critical impression of America,

few magazines will print it. If you write as vivid and critical an impression of Russia, it will not be difficult to get it printed in America. The same journal will pray you to write up Rasputin, but reject most thin-skinnedly an account of an American auto-da-fé. The chains clank in Siberia; you mustn't hear them in Georgia.

A notable exception to this lies in two works of Upton Sinclair, ' The Jungle ' and ' The Brass Check,' where certainly America is subjected to lurid criticism, and the criticism not only seems not to be resented, but even to be encouraged. Perhaps it is because underlying Sinclair's diatribes and credulities there is a real love of America. He is destructive, but he is also creative or would-be creative. Only let an outsider tackle the theme of Sinclair and he would be very coldly received.

One's thoughts go naturally to ' Main Street,' that very quiet but powerful critical book on the American Middle West. How explain its success? I think it is successful not because it shocks Americans but because it pleases them. It was authentic 1921 America. It never was before. It is where America stands in her humanitarian march forward, and despite criticism it is a very creditable advance. The American flowers are growing in the gardens of Gopher Prairie. What provincial town in England or France or Russia is doing better? Then as you read the book you feel that Sinclair Lewis is a genuine American—one of the American people. If an Englishman had written as good a novel on the life of the same place it would have been barbed with

the detached barbs of non-responsible criticism and might quite possibly have been intolerable in America. On the other hand, ' Main Street ' has had less success in England, just because it was not barbed. It is, in short, not a critical book so much as a creative one. ' Babbit,' which was much more barbed, was much more successful.

The love of America for America is growing. America ceases to be a ship merely anchored on the Hudson. The New England tradition is passing. Emerson, Thoreau, Whittier, Holmes, and many others, were nearer to England than the great American writers of to-day. They felt that American civilisation was something unperfumed. The old literary world of America shivered at Boston, and would have felt much warmer at Chelsea. The purity of language, the asceticism of thought, the severity of judgment of the great New England writers, belong to the Old World and its bitterness rather than to the New World with its providential blessings. Europe and America are entirely unlike in atmosphere. New England related America to Europe simply as an extension. But Europe is a mutual mortification society and America is a land of boundless spaces, overflowing with prosperity, mellow, kind. Not a land of discipline and the ' place to which God has called you,' but a place of holiday. America compared with Europe is an afternoon off—a genuine human romp. Such a story as that of ' The Scarlet Letter ' is a mistake in location now. It ought to have been somewhere in Southern Scotland rather than in America.

Puritanism has ceased to be characteristic of America. New England is losing her hegemony, and the leadership, as might be expected, is going to the Centre. Boston has a great past; Chicago has a great future. American self-consciousness begins to centre in the Middle West, and it is not Puritan, not even prudish—where courtship is done in cars and they ' bob ' their stockings and forgive Arbuckle and are nearer to the Mormons, where nearly everyone is on double rations of food and floor-space and ordinary human happiness, where Europe has ceased to matter, and the children's legs are double fatness because the corn is sweet and plenty.

Someone has been and pressed the lines of care out of the people's brows. In what a relaxed and joyful mood they are writing over there! What you miss in ' Main Street ' you will find in ' Lulu Bett.' If you don't realise the genial soul in Carl Sandburg troubadouring it round the universities with an old guitar and a repertoire of Negro Blues, you will not be able to miss it in the exhilarating profuseness and jovial nonsensicalities of Vachel Lindsay:

> ' Ho! for Kansas! land that restores us,
> When houses choke us and great books bore us.'

Whoever dreamed of saying ' Ho! for Kansas!' till now? Ho! for Stratford-on-Avon. Ho! for Oberammergau, Ho! for everything non-American, but not Ho! for Kansas.

It is not business that is speaking, not the reformed packer, not the magnate, but just the ordinary man and

woman, the studentry of the universities, the young wives and lively daughters and the boy without a complex. When you look on ' Lorado ' Taft's ' Fountains of Time ' and then turn to the central American humanity passing by you are aware of a new focus for the new world.

Humanity, and especially American humanity, sees America afresh to-day. She is new material for literature—the ever-new. She is material, but not materials. America is the seed-field of the generations, where humanity drives its ploughshare into virgin soil and sows afresh. Europe may abide in the light of setting suns, and be seen often in the glamour of it; but America is in the light of rising suns. She is in the creative light which bids life increase.

One would therefore expect a prophetic literature rather than a romantic one. And it is truly a prophetic literature which she has. It is another way of saying that it is creative. For to say ' There will be light ' is close akin to saying ' Let there be light '—the *Fiat lux* of God, the grand creative adjuration of the Spirit. How different from the melancholy sentimentalism of evening-tide and of old-age—' There has been light,' ' There used to be a light in the world, children, but that was long ago, long, long ago, when Christ in a human pilgrim's garb walked in the world among humanity and begged a night's shelter at peasants' cottages; long before our time, when there were wise men in Athens and great conquerors in Rome, and God walked unknown among His people, and the light shone in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it

not '! That is the glamour of the old harper who sings of what was and what never will be again. But the voice of America is not the voice of the ballad-singer, but of one praising the Lord with the sound of the trumpet; it is the voice of the herald trumpeting and proclaiming before dawn, telling of things that will be which never have been before.

I think not only of the heard but of the unheard. While a man of satirical genius such as Edgar Lee Masters can write the beautiful and prophetic epitaph of Anne Rutledge with its 'Bloom for ever, O Republic, from the dust of my bosom!' there are thousands saying similar things unheard. There is local literature all over the United States, poems and expressed thoughts of all kinds inspired by the countryside and by the ways of local people. It gets into letters, love-letters, sermons, poets' corners; or it never gets further than the lips that utter it. But it cannot be gainsaid. It is in high-schools and in colleges as well as in universities. Exclusive business may have doubts of it, but it cannot discourage it. It would divert the current into boosting the home-city and advertising what you have to sell, but it knows that mere business cannot cover it. The university of Michigan had Robert Frost; Princeton had Noyes; and other universities have their pilot-poets also—just to give direction and leading to the myriadfold poetic impulse which is found in American youth to-day.

Ah! but there will always be laughter, there will always be criticism from across the Atlantic. The literary dons in perfect style will roast the young America and

gloat over a piquant dish. Perhaps. But he who roasts shall hereafter himself be roasted. And as regards young America there will always be a good deal over after the feast. Youth has one pardonable and unpardonable triumph over age, and that is, that whilst age has its laugh youth has its life, whilst age has its judgment youth has its prophecy. The young men shall see visions, but the best that the old men can do is to dream dreams.

XIV

Extravaganza

Humour, wit, extravaganza, burlesque: these are the natural planes of the risible, to which may be added farce, which is, however, artificial, and combines upon occasion all the other four. Of all these we like humour most, though we laugh more at burlesque. We like wit when we ourselves are witty. The matter-of-fact are disqualified from appreciating extravaganza, and the fastidious will obviously loathe burlesque.

Ordinary humour derived from the description of human nature has the largest constituency, and it is certainly very large. We are called a humour-loving people. It is commonly said that you do not begin to make an Anglo-Saxon understand anything till you have made him laugh. Clever public speakers get their audiences laughing first so as to prepare their minds for the serious matter coming. Solemn-faced foreign savants who come to us with long prosaic expansions of theories are told plainly that they will not receive attention because they have no sense of humour. Cases can be won in court sheerly by humour; it is of great value to the attorney. Judges look for it; juries feed on it. It is indispensable to politicians.

One would think, therefore, that there must be a great field for humorous writers in England and America. Curiously enough, it is not so. The field is limited. Humorous writers can go but a short distance upon the road to fame, and then they find progress barred. Humorous writers are seldom conceded a first place in

our literature. In the spoken word one must have humour to be taken seriously; in the written word one must be serious. Weight seems to tell more than lightness. One must be serious to be taken seriously. The pseudo-science of Wells, the drab realism of Bennett, the morose earnestness of Galsworthy, tell more in letters than the wit of Shaw, the satiric mimicry of Beerbohm, or the mockery of Wyndham Lewis. It is true, there is one crowning exception, one of our greatest humorous writers is acknowledged as one of the greatest of all—Charles Dickens. But even he achieved his position more by the sentimental than by the humorous expression of his genius.

Mark Twain's success is, I suppose, the nearest approach to recognition of humour. But in his case it is rather indulgence of a lovable personality. There is nothing classical about his reputation.

In Russia, curiously enough, both Mark Twain and Jerome K. Jerome achieved a standing in literature higher than these writers obtained in their own countries, and, paradoxically, I think that is due to the fact that Russians have less sense of humour than we have.

American humour often misses fire when brought to England; much English humour seems very solemn funning in the United States. In the days of Mark Twain and Tom Hood the nations were nearer together in literature than they are now, but the present generation of humorous writers are confined each to his own side of the Atlantic. This seems to be especially the case in books of extravaganza. Don Marquis, though

he is almost a second Mark Twain, is unknown in London; William Caine's riotously funny novels failed of recognition in New York.

'The Cruise of the *Jasper B.*,' 'The Old Soak,' 'Archy and Mehitabel,' delightful as they are to one at home in both countries, are closed books to the stay-at-home Britisher. Extravaganza intensifies accent. When the cat Mehitabel says: 'Being Cleopatra was only an incident in my career,' it needs to be said in hoarse breathing Americanese to have its full complement of fun. Christopher Morley is nearer England; he was a Rhodes scholar, but his clever and artistic extravaganza' Where the Blue Begins ' though a 'best-seller ' in New York was not comprehensible in London. In the same way the humorous writings of Wyndham Lewis, A. P. Herbert, and William Caine do not 'get over ' in America.

Farce, and even political pasquinade, has more success than extravaganza. Apparently it is easier for the national gaze to adjust itself to the more artificial product. Felix the Cat goes well in both countries. But extravaganza differs from farce as a cartoon differs from Mutt and Jeff. It is much more a matter of Art, and it presents to the reader not laughable absurdity but real life illuminated by the humorous exaggeration of salient features. It is no use saying no one ever had such a long nose as a certain character in a certain book. What you must understand is that the nose is the man. Lady Sheba, in Caine's amusing tale,* is depicted with the most fantastic pen in the world, writing her scanda-

* 'Lady Sheba's Last Stunt.'

lous memoirs. But then she is the vast exaggeration of the publicity-seeking girl of our age with a passion for the limelight.

Droop, the publisher's reader who gets half-a-crown for reading manuscripts, is a cartoon of the whole tribe of Droops. The account of Packer the publisher, supposedly taken from a future ' Who isn't Who,' with his marvellous and incredible past, is like a page of Rabelais—' 1890 Bookmaker's clerk. 1891 Cab shelter attendant; Billposter. 1895 Entertainer; Rabbit skin merchant. 1896 Fried fish shop proprietor. 1897 Servants' registry office proprietor; Asylum attendant; Under porter in residential flats. 1898 Beauty specialist. 1899 Piano tuner; Chiromantist; Public-house broker; Slate club secretary; Undertaker; Actor. 1900 Circular distributor. 1901 Traveller in corn plasters; Colporteur; Teacher of physical culture. 1902 Bone dealer. 1903 Bone setter. 1904 Traveller in monumental masonry. 1905 Rent collector. 1906 Band agent. 1907 Waiter. 1908 Proprietor of the De Luxe Boarding Establishment, Ramsgate. 1909 Teacher of Dancing. 1910 Traveller in clay pigeons; Traveller in labels; Traveller in loofahs. 1911 Obituary notice agent. 1912 Traveller in fly-papers. 1913 Business adviser; Chewing-gum vendor; Dealer in antiques. 1914 Debt collector; Fine art dealer. 1915 Cinema attendant. 1916 Horse dentist. 1917-1918 Soldier. 1919 Traveller in sausage casings; Sandwichman. 1920 Book publisher. Recreations: none. Clubs: none. Residence: 13, Dog Street, Soho.'

Hoot, the publicity agent, is like a *Simplicimus* pic-

torial outrage—but he is the eternal booster. Hickey, the Bootleg King, is the wild spirit of American banditry 'canned' in a flaring canister. It is no use saying no American ever behaved so outrageously—he is the quintessence of hooch, bad whisky, and lynch law poured into one of the 'hardest guys' we've seen. The frightened English aristocrats so fantastically sketched are cartoons of popular ideas concerning aristocrats. Tutchley, who 'touches' so much money, is another fantasy derived from reality.

Every paragraph has its laugh; one laughs at items and one laughs at totals. And when the book is finished—all too soon—one is left in a very good humour, at peace with the world and with ourselves. A cordial geniality carries the story along. It is very English.

Another very amusing extravaganza, and perhaps the cleverest book that William Caine ever wrote, was 'The Strangeness of Noel Carton.' It was awarded a critics' prize, not that that amounted to much, but it showed in a way that it was a literary man's book and a literary man's great laugh. A husband who is being kept on a short allowance by his mean rich wife conceives the horrible idea of revenge of writing a novel secretly and putting his wife into it. The unhappy husband is being driven crazy by his wife, and as the writing of his story progresses he gradually goes out of his mind and begins to confuse fiction and truth in a startling but extremely diverting way. Here extravaganza has complete sway. I remember well one of the poor man's expressions of connubial boredom: 'I know that she knows and she knows that I know that she

knows and I know that she knows that I know that she knows,' etc.

And what more astonishingly diverting than the account of the husband's attempted doubling on his tracks to escape at Paddington Station?

Noel Carton ought to live long. Then there is that excruciatingly funny story of an English dude drunkard and his man-eating temperance aunt—' Great Snakes.' I suppose innumerable copies of that literary joke were sold at least in England. Then one ought to mention ' Boom ' and ' Bildad the Quill-driver ' and ' The Author of Trixie,' all sheer gifts to the educatedgloomy, made to drive away their blues.

It is, however, all very English, though I believe Caine was born in the Isle of Man. Many races love extravaganza, but they love their own. The Jew, for instance, is especially enamoured of that form, and there is much of it in the journalistic work of Guedalla and Mencken. It gleams too in Zangwill, but it is of a mocking kind. Russia has her own, though it is often too coarse to be admitted to rank. ' Foma Fomitch, or the Friend of the Family,' by Dostoievsky, is a delightful example; Gogol's ' Dead Souls ' and ' Revizor ' are classical. German extravaganza, as far as I know, is logical, cruel, and bitter. The French do not employ extravaganza much, but they produced the King of the art in Rabelais. ' Then did she eat twenty-five bushels of tripes. O the fair fecality of that filthy stuff!' Aristophanes was a master of it in ancient Greece, but he betrayed extravaganza to burlesque, and Rabelais is greater than he. There is delightful extravaganza in Shakespeare in

'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' and not a little in Swift, though it be sometimes rather foul—in 'Gulliver's Travels.'

It is a classical way and mode of criticism, the dismissal of an era with a laugh; it is a health-giving purge of tired mental channels, something not to be overlooked in the hygiene and economy of national literature.

XV

First You Must Live

' I want to write; I want to express myself. What ought I to do?'

This is a question which is often asked of me, and the answer I give is: ' First you must live.'

Reading books is good, but it is experience at second hand. Study is good, but only as a preparation for life. Too much study makes you dull and unfits you for living. Books give you facts which someone else has chewed first, and library air is twice-breathed air. And no book is a quite safe guide to life, for the simple reason that life itself is always three months ahead of it on the day of publication. I mean that, despite the foolish adage that there is nothing new under the sun, it is a fact that each of us is born into a new world and is intended to have an absolutely new experience.

Once I was approached by a young English girl who against the advice of all her friends intended to make a journey across Europe on foot. A provincial lawyer was in love with her. He was opposed to the idea because he was conventional, and it would ill become him as a lawyer to have a wife who was capable of such a rash act as to set off for Constantinople in male attire, trusting to her feet to carry her, and to her woman's guile to outwit any Italian or Bulgarian who might molest her.

I had a long talk with her, and I revised the kit she proposed to carry, made her leave behind a travelling-bed and a revolver, and I took it upon me to say, ' I

believe you are right; you ought to go. I hope some quite unpleasant things happen to you on the way. The more adventure you have the better it will be for you. I am sure you will not be killed. And if you really do reach Constantinople you will have had a rich experience.'

I thought that even if she gave up after two hundred miles, she would at least have had that much experience, whereas if she never went at all and married the lawyer she would always regret that she had somehow been thwarted in life. As a matter of fact she got to Constantinople quite safely, and was proud to show her only scar, a knife wound which she got struggling with a sailor in a café in Marseilles. I am afraid it was rather hard on the lawyer, for she fell in love with a young attaché at Constantinople, and he asked her to marry him. I met her when she came back, and I was not entirely surprised to hear of this new romance, for she was at least twice as good-looking as she had been when she set out. She had been living, she had been finding expression, and that was visible in her eyes. Incidentally she had wished to write, and she had had some slight success with her articles in the Press. And writing did not seem to matter so much; she had new life and new happiness.

You remember the opening chapter of Harry Franck's 'Vagabond Journey Round the World.' He recounts how at a college gathering he evoked some incredulous mirth by declaring his belief that without money one could travel all over the world. It was not merely an idle opinion; he proved it afterwards in his own life.

I will add this, that it is much easier to do it while you are young than to wait till middle age. Nothing is more pathetic than the ' some day ' talk. Some day is never. Youth is the time of possibilities. If you start living when you are young you do not arrive at middle age. You remain young till you are old. But when you are on the platform and the last express has gone there is nothing to do but take a local. And one true experience leads to another. What I mean is that if you are on the express, you will probably make the connections, whereas in the local you stop at all stations and do not get very far.

When I was twenty I had a post, and short of committing a felony there was no way of being dismissed the service. My colleagues talked much about the pension they would draw at sixty, and appeared to be comfortably settled for life. But I grew melancholy and wore my hair long and annoyed my colleagues by wearing strange-looking hats. I had a zest for adventure, a strong desire to express myself, and I was of robust health, but I seemed committed to a form of life which meant nothing to me. I well remember reading the following sentence, ' No one has ever achieved anything in life who has not at some time or other staked everything on an act of faith.' I believe it was said by Scott Holland. Well, my act of faith was cutting everything and going to live a vagabond life in Russia.

In the inner sanctum of the head of the department I was asked: ' Are you not giving up the substance for the shadow ?' I said, ' Yes, I am after that shadow.'

It has been a wonderful shadow. I have still not caught

up to it. It has led me such a dance. It has led me into all manner of countries, into all sorts of adventures, to triumphs, despairs, and again to triumphs, and to happinesses that one cannot conceive of in a sheltered existence.

Now I can say with confidence that comes of wide experience, ' One does not need to be afraid of anything in life.' *Courage, mon ami ; le diable est mort—le diable* being the chalk line in the yard which feeble-minded chickens are afraid to cross, *le diable* being that substance which we must not forsake in answer to some beckoning shadow, *le diable* being the digest of life which we are offered as a perfect substitute for life itself.

Unfortunately, despite the march of progress and the development of civilisation, this is rather a sitting-down age. Hips are getting bigger. Babies are born with spectacles on, and at twenty-one you buy a cemetery lot. There are not enough people going about prospecting, making research in human life and learning from first-hand experience what sort of a place the world is. Literature is some reflection of life, and I feel painfully that most books are derivative from other books. Most books should derive from life itself; they should not be the children of other books.

One reason why so much nonsense is written about the rising generation is that there is a sort of book theory about it. Very few successful writers keep their personal knowledge up-to-date. Imagination is praised far too much. I have checked many works of imagination and have found that what has been merely imagined

is generally far from the truth. Experience, travel, converse with many kinds of people, testing of reality through hardship—all these should come first. You do not just imagine the thrills of a game of football—you play the game. Nor can you imagine what it is like to struggle through the snow of a high mountain pass —you must have done something of the kind. Nor is it profitable for a girl to look at a handsome man and imagine he is Sir Galahad or the Sheikh, or to look at a man with a twisted face and think he is a Fagin or Bill Sykes. She must somehow contrive to put him to the test of her experience. And the world is now full of categories such as 'collegiate,' 'flapper,' 'Babbit,' 'rotary,' 'country club,' 'small town,' 'tourist,' and stale mottoes like 'Do everything once.' We may as well do some things several times, and find out that the person we so easily classify is quite different and perhaps unclassifiable when we have come to know him. It is not fair to accept all that is given us. And it is intended that we should use our own limbs and wits to get full value out of the unique experience of life. Hence my advice: FIRST YOU MUST LIVE.

XVI

Maxim Gorky's Finest Novel

Maxim Gorky was an example of the type of writers who live first and write afterwards, in contradistinction to the type that, like the late George Gissing, wrote first and hoped to live some day or other. He was like Jack London, Cunninghame Graham, Joseph Conrad, Zola, and others whose imagination was controlled by a knowledge of life as it is gained from experience. They preferred the fresh air of open country to the twice-breathed air of museums. They are not like that hen who sat in the elm tree one night and dreamed the world was coming to an end.

Alexey Maximovitch Peskof was born at Nijni Novgorod in 1869. His pen-name, Maxim the Bitter, does not mean Maxim the pessimist, or Maxim the disillusioned; rather Maxim the sad, the pained, the poignant. It is not a neurasthenic appellative as in English. His father was of the working class. He was early left an orphan, sent to school for five months, and after that taught himself in odd moments. After jobs as errand boy and apprentice, he ran from home and helped a cook on a Volga steamer. He is said to have cultivated a taste for literature by aid of the ship's library. After that he worked in a bakery and, covered with flour, met Chaliapine, then on the same rung of the social ladder and also making bread. They sang duets together perhaps as they kneaded the bread. Then he took a job as a signalman; then he hawked cranberry drink in the streets, no doubt with a huge

glass jar on a stand. He worked in mines; he tramped the whole of Southern Russia, taking casual work here and there to pay his way. And in this casual tramping time he began to scribble, tried his hand at short stories and sketches, and suddenly leapt to fame.

It would appear that when this meditative and thoughtful being became surcharged with experience of life he just naturally flowed over. All his early output is extraordinarily vital: 'Tchelkash,' 'Three,' 'Twenty-six and One,' 'Foma Gordyeef,' 'The Fellow-Traveller.'

Later, he seemed to exhaust his experience. He never went back to life in the rough, not even after the proletarian revolution, but instead substituted political and literary experience for that of tramping and living the life of the people. His first impressions clouded over with other people's opinions, and his work suffered.

But genius undoubtedly breathes from his first novels and sketches. Judged by these, he belongs to the first rank of Russian writers. Not so great as Dostoievsky, Tolstoy, and Turgeniev, he comes next after these. He was undoubtedly more powerful than any of his contemporaries in the Russian field.

I take 'Foma Gordyeef.' It was published in 1903, when Gorky was thirty-four. The best translation of the book into English is that by Isabel Hapgood, and I wish the publishers would reissue it. Here is a book which for sheer power, verity, and style is worth everyone's consideration. It is the story of a boy who was the son of a visionary over-religious Russian woman, very characteristic of Russia, and of a cock-sure parvenu peasant merchant making his millions in a Volga city.

The mother dies in childbirth, and the doting but materialistic father is left to bring up his heir and train him to be as hard and vulgar as he is himself. It is not the story of the boy's life as much as of his soul, not so much of his soul as of the clash of mingled temperament, father's and mother's blood. It is epic in quality because you forget the *dramatis personæ* and think of Russia. It is not the clash of Ignatz and Natasha in their offspring; it is the dissonance of Slav and Tartar in the Russian soul. It is a study which I should like to submit to Freud, or to that new psycho-analyst who has, I believe, superseded Freud, Dr. Alfred Adler of Vienna. He would give you the mathematical formulæ of this book, but the untutored Gorky knew them without modern psychological science. He put forth his hand and the Lord hath done wonderful things.

Gorky belonged to the Volga; he also was an orphan. he was a bit of a Foma, and Foma did not ripen to sweetness, but to be socially bitter and inedible, Foma the bitter.

In a country of many Fomas you would say there was bound to be revolution. Lenin himself was a Volga product and had something of the same destructive rage against society.

The novel is written in a fine virile Russian. It has not the golden notes of Turgeniev nor the charming whimsicality of Chekhoff, but it has a force, directness, and realism which these writers lack. Though a long book, it is never verbose as in our literature, despite his merits, Hardy is; passion and suffering seemed to have burned away superfluous verbiage. He is not

' knowing '; he does not preach; he does not step aside to sneer; he does not pop in little bits of political propaganda; but, as a man who sees only one thing in art, drives on to his end. Without desiring to impress you, he nevertheless gets your sympathy. His young heart calls out to yours, and yours is young too. You become as much concerned about Foma as if he were your nearest friend, your closest kindred, some strand of your own personality plucked by an unseen hand. Russia is a country concerning which, for some reason or other, people become anxious. Perhaps because racially she is the hope of the world. And in ' Foma Gordyeef ' one grows anxious about Russia. Again the supreme epic effect is achieved.

In other circumstances Foma might have been an insignificant gentleman living on his vast means. The business had become almost mechanical; in any case there was the safe and sure senior partner on the spot to manage it. He might, as the restless son of an American millionaire, have gone to Paris and blown off his superfluous energy in Montmartre. But the ways of Anglo-Saxons are no guide to the ways of Russians. Their interior make-up is different; their destiny different. As the story of this merchant's son develops it grows upon one that there is no escape for his soul except through explosion and death. The apparently simple Foma shall be driven by slow stages to a point where he shall say a final No to the framework of society, to the life which is offered him, and make a catastrophic defiance.

Yet now and again bird-song is heard. The simple

love of a very decent girl is offered him. Or the pilgrim says to him: ' You look up at the sky, as you lie under a bush, and it keeps descending, descending to you, as though it wanted to embrace you. . . . Your soul is warm and quietly joyful, you desire nothing, you envy no one. . . . And so it seems as though on all the earth there were only you and God. . . . All around is silence: only the birds are singing, and this silence is so marvellous that it seems as though the birds were singing in your own breast.

That is the peace of religion, of Nature, not social peace. Gorky's conscience was social. He was too brotherly to be a monk and too sympathetic to take refuge in Nature. For good or ill this conscience drove him on to be a revolutionary and a politician. He could not help it. There was a deep fount of religion in him, and there was poetry and love of the unspoiled creation. But the sufferings of others humiliated him in his soul when he was young, and he chose to be Maxim the Bitter, not Maxim the Joyful. As we have seen, a change of government does not necessarily change the relationship of man to man. The soul remains uneasy, rebellious, defiant, cureless except through God. Its dissatisfaction is a glory, not a reproach. It is part of man's essential poetic protest. Maxim Gorky obtained his inspiration direct from life, and it came forth of him in this great novel ' Foma Gordyeef.'

XVII

At the Moscow Art Theatre: 1914

I. 'Hamlet'

Here is a neat, compact, simple, wonderful theatre—Europe's belov'd toy-box. It has in its stage properties all the types of worldly circumstance, and you can fit up for the puppets anything from a palace chamber to a beggar's night-house, from a cherry-orchard in June to the huts in the snow in a Russian winter. It has its 'troop' of a hundred and fifty players, its one hundred and fifty puppets or types of humankind, in themselves master-keys of human character, puppets that you can dress up how you will, who will show forth for you the destinies of humankind and unfold before your eyes any imaginable mystery. The genius of the Art Theatre is that whatsoever it shows you—comedy, tragedy, reality, life—it shows it in an atmosphere of mystery and beauty. The fairies who change the scenes walk on doves' feet.

1.

It is seldom that at the Theatre of Art the same piece is performed twice in succession. You may go every night for a week and see a different drama each time. In this way it has more truth. It reflects more truly the varying world. It does not with commercial persistency play the same piece night after night and matinee after matinee till the puppets look shabby and the hands that move them are tired. The 'Cherry

Orchard ' lately reached on Chekhoff's birthday its 200th performance, but it reached it after ten years. The cherry-orchard always blooms anew, and the branch laden with blossom puts its dear hand in at the cottage window, the birds sing over the orchard, the cuckoo calls, and the scent of spring is breathed across the stage of the world. The Theatre of Art, loving Chekhoff as a man loves a beautiful woman, will never forget *what he meant*. Every performance is a remembrance of him, a tender gladness. Nothing in the theatre is dead custom or habit. It is alive and thoughtful every moment. The acting comes out of the heart rather than from the memory, and consequently there are never two performances alike. And whatever is in the air of Europe is reflected in the action there. It is touched to fine issues.

I have seen several performances at the Art Theatre—Chekhoff's ' Cherry Orchard,' ' The Possessed,' by Dostoievsky, ' Hamlet.' I suppose ' Hamlet ' is necessarily the most interesting to British people, and it is to ' Hamlet ' that the British would first go as to something which in essence they understand and of which they never tire. For me the ' Cherry Orchard ' remains the most beautiful and touching thing I have seen on any stage, and from long days of winter greyness and city noise I look back to it as to a latest reappearance of ' the vision.' ' The Possessed ' was interesting because all literate Russia had been discussing it. ' Hamlet ' was most interesting of all as being of ' the world ' and ' all time.'

Gordon Craig's immense screens (of thirty feet high

and absolutely undecorated) are intended to throw into relief first the actors and second the essential significance of the drama, and to save the mind from wandering to the scenic effects. The actual performance has therefore become more important. You do not go to the theatre in order to see Craig's screens but to see a nobler performance of 'Hamlet,' and in a subtler scene to empower the players to give you a nobler performance. For it is almost a truism in Russia that the stage reflects the culture and the temperament of the audience.

'You will see, the theatre takes its stand on emotional rendering, not on technique,' said the secretary to me before the performance commenced. 'We have little or no interest in plays of technical superiority such as those of Ibsen or Bernard Shaw or Pinero. We even play novels like "The Brothers Karamazof" or "The Possessed" without dramatic versions. In a year we are putting on "Pickwick Papers." Ours is not a theatre of dramatic crises and "moments"!'

2.

'Hamlet' as they played it was quite fresh and new to me. On the English stage there are so many conventions and traditions that, except for the personality of the principal actors, one performance is much like another. But this Moscow 'Hamlet' was free, it had altogether new renderings of passages, it had even an occasional verbal difference or omission which caused one to pause and consider how certain lines had been rendered in the original. Such phrases as

'I'll make a ghost of him that lets me,'
'This is miching mallecho; it means mischief,'
'They fool me to the top of my bent,'

were necessarily puzzles for the Russian translator. The phrase 'caviare to the general' becomes 'like an orange to a certain sort of animal' because caviare is cheap in Russia and liked by all. 'Words, words, words,' said so irritably by our actors, becomes something very arresting in the mouth of M. Katchalof, the great Russian actor who plays the part. He says the first 'words' in a much-meaning whisper, the second 'words' with a sort of defiance, the third 'words' with loud and angry emphasis.

Shakespeare's tag—

'And if the King like not the comedy,
Why then belike, he likes it not perdy,'

so nimbly spoken on our English stage, is probably better understood by the Russians, who make it appear that Hamlet is going to say: 'If the King likes not our drama, why then it's proof he did commit the murder'; but Rozencrantz and Guildenstern come in, and Hamlet stops at 'Why then' because they overhear, and he quickly turns a phrase, and says:

'. . . why then, he likes it not.'

On the other hand, there seems to be a misunderstanding of 'They fool me to the top of my bent,' which is rendered 'They fool me so my mind will give way,' when Shakespeare meant, 'No matter what foolery I say they will not cross me.' Hamlet does not feel mad; he is contemptuous and full of noble wrath. But

Katchalof is forced to put his hands to his temples and have once more ' distraction in his aspect.'

' A little more than kin and less than kind ' became, if I remember rightly, ' A little less than a friend, a little more than a relation.' The ghost's subterranean whisper ' swear ' was changed to the meaning of the winter wind with the clang of chains in it. Crazed Ophelia does not distribute real flowers, but makes believe to do so. The fencing scene is played with foils and daggers. If for these things alone, you consider ' Hamlet ' anew.

3.

The part is played by a noble actor who has the voice of Forbes-Robertson and the strength and grace and height of Chaliapine. He is not theatrical. He does not rave on the stage, but his voice is thrilling and emotional. His voice is always in relief against the answerless silence. His eyes, darkness-haunted, subdue the theatre and the world to the twilight of his reveries. ' Hamlet ' is taken not as a curiosity of history or of literature, but as a great human mystery.

Thus in the second scene the Court of the King is shown in an immense chamber walled by Craig's thirty feet high screens all covered with gold leaf. The King and Queen in cloth of gold, sitting on a throne at the height of some fifty golden stairs, are holding golden sceptre and orb, and all in golden cloaks and head-dresses the courtiers are grouped up and down the stairs in a pyramid of astonishing magnificence. There is not one person who is not in cloth of gold. But Hamlet is in black. He is not in this royal chamber, but

sits on a chair in front of the footlights and, leaning on a black railing, looks at the gorgeous scene as he might look at a similar scene on the stage of a theatre.

Thus the conversation which takes place is not real conversation—' Let not a mother lose her prayers, Hamlet,' and the rest of it—but part of Hamlet's troubled thoughts. It is what he is thinking. The whole is an unsubstantial pageant, and presently fades away, leaving Hamlet alone with the audience, and then Horatio comes in.

The characters are what Hamlet thought them to be, not more. There is no coarseness about Ophelia; she is perfectly gentle to the end. She lisps when she is crazed, and smiles irrelevantly. The little coarseness which Shakespeare gives her in one of the songs is here smoothed away into inaudibility. Polonius is a tedious old fool, ignorant of the true values of life, giving to his son for advice worthless old maxims and using his daughter's truth and honour as if they were merchandise and could be replaced.

The triumphant scene of the play is the players' spectacle and Hamlet's bearding of the King. In this Russian version the ' Murder of Gonzago ' is played out in an arena just before the footlights, and the King and Queen in their pomp look on from the same high gilded throne with pyramidal court of followers in cloaks and head-dresses of cloth of gold. Hamlet flirts with Ophelia with his head in her lap but with his real attention fixed on the players and the Court. He is still in black—or is it in dark, gleamless purple?—and when he leaves Ophelia and stalks upward to the King and

Queen and bends upon them his wild, dark, penetrating eyes, he is a majestic and wonderful figure: there is nothing in the whole stage and theatre and world but Hamlet and your beating heart.

4.

It is interesting that the atmosphere of the play is Eastern, not Western. It is the religion of suffering once more: Hamlet, Ophelia, the King, the Queen, Laertes, are all sufferers. Your pity is asked even for the King, and the repentance problem of the murderer has a Dostoievskian touch. The most Western person in the play is Polonius with his *prudent* advice, and he is dealt with almost contemptuously. It is only in the gravity of the language and in occasional details that the play is foreign to Russia. For instance, such a statement as that of Hamlet, that he loved Ophelia more than 40,000 brothers, is somewhat opposed to the spirit of Russia, where brother and sister seem almost to be more attached to one another than man and wife, and where the sister-in-law gives far more trouble than the mother-in-law.

It is painfully evident in the very first scene that the guards are not talking in colloquial Russian or as they would on any natural occasion in Russia. The grave-diggers' talk is also unpleasantly remote from probability. It is only in the blank verse and the more noble speeches that the Russian is credible, and, indeed, even then it needed all the glamour of Katchalof's voice to make the translation worthy of the original. Apparently the translator was unaware of the rhythmical

beauty and the natural, easy unself-consciousness of Shakespeare's prose. 'Speak the speech, I pray you,' becomes:

> 'Please pronounce this speech as I have shown you—easily and lightly. If you shout, as many of our actors do, it will be as pleasant to my ears as if a hawker had sung my lines. Do not saw the air too fervently with the hands thus: be more moderate. In the floods, storms and, as I should say, whirlpools of your passions, you should preserve that moderation which softens their harshness. Oh! it is always terribly vexing to me when some stout, long-haired fellow tears a passion to tatters in order that it may thunder in the ears of the gallery, which senses nothing beyond inexplicable dumb pantomime and shrieks. Such an actor I would have whipped for his cries and expletives. Please avoid this. . . .'

The whole speech is cast in thee and thou, and lacks the courtliness of Hamlet. It would be vexing to Shakespeare—if anything could be vexing to him. The text of the acting version needs some revision, especially since the Theatre of Art have promised to bring it to London in their repertoire. Otherwise it is probably the most interesting performance of 'Hamlet' that Europe has yet seen.

The genius of Katchalof fuses everything. When the play is over the impression you have is that you have seen a play, not about a man, but about Man. You feel how noble he is, what a wonderfully beautiful but inexplicable creation—

> 'in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a God!'

You feel how pathetic is his destiny, foiled by his very gifts, suffocated by the world's fresh air, in the world as in a prison—how that note of the world's being a prison is akin to the Russian idea. In Russia the prison, Siberia, the fetter and the chain are emblems of man's earthly destiny. You feel his inability to right himself and harmonise his life with the perfectly beautiful nature about him. You feel how conditional are his gifts beside his unconditional, immortal soul.

The Russian 'Hamlet' is a great play. Shakespeare's corn of wheat has fallen into the earth and died, and has sprung up again in the Theatre of Art.

II. 'The Cherry Orchard'

The first most beautiful thing I saw in Russia when I returned in 1913 was the peasants worshipping on Christmas Eve at Kief, the second was the vision of the snowy Caucasian ranges glimmering and purple in the evening January sunshine, the third—but it seems a sin to count and to number—was Chekhoff's 'Cherry Orchard' as performed by the Theatre of Art at Moscow. To these in turn it has been possible to look back each night before falling asleep, as to the last vision of the beautiful, in the remembrance of which there has been sanctuary from the grey, the noisy, the trivial, from all those mean and sordid circumstances of living which reflect themselves in our souls, making us seem mean and sordid to ourselves.

I stepped one Sunday morning out of the grey slush of the Moscow streets and the bitter wind and the

dreary crowd of silent muffled pedestrians into the Theatre of Art, not into church as might have seemed natural, but into what is perhaps the church of the future. A perfectly clean theatre with waxed floors and no dirt even in the gallery, a simple theatre without plush or gilding, with hard but elegant seats even in the stalls, a theatre where, before you enter, you must hang up your hat and overcoat on a peg and take off your overshoes, a theatre of no clapping or laughter, and to which you cannot be admitted if you are unpunctual and arrive after the action has commenced, a theatre where between the acts you all leave your seats to walk and talk in the corridors and picture galleries of the theatre, or to sit and take coffee in the restaurant, a theatre where the raising of the curtain afresh is not heralded by bells or knocks on the floor, but by turning the electric light off first a quarter, then a half, then three-quarters.

These are the material characteristics of the place, and are relatively unimportant. But having described them I feel that the reader has a seat—and seats are not easy to get, which is another material circumstance of the Theatre of Art.

It is good in the bare winter to come into a theatre and see the beauty of summer, to be for a few hours under the illusion that the season has gone forward several months, and that the day, instead of being a bleak Sunday in March, is an incense-breathing morning in June.

You are sitting in your seat, the lights go down, the curtain gently parts and shows you a many-windowed

room in a country house. The early-morning sunshine is streaming on to the old furniture and on to the spacious floor. Someone comes and opens the windows, and the fresh June air comes in, and is wafted even across the footlights to you. You see acres of cherry trees all transfigured with blossoms, you hear the birds singing in choirs, you hear the cuckoos far away, you almost hear the bees. The illusion is so complete that for my part my nostrils and mind are full of the fragrance and scent of an orchard in bloom, though necessarily there is actually no such perfume in the theatre.

The story is that a Russian family has been living extravagantly in Paris, up to the ears in debt, but throwing money about with that recklessness which characterises so many Russians. They return to their estate in Russia when they are quite clearly ' ruined.' When the curtain parts, the lord and lady, or rather, the lady and her brother, are just expected home. The servants and neighbours are waiting, and not only they, but, thanks to the art of the theatre, the cherry garden also is waiting. The cherry garden has been waiting in the background all the time the family were wasting their substance in foolish Paris; it has remained beautiful and serene like Solveig waiting for Peer Gynt.

The Theatre of Art makes something more of it even than that. The cherry garden all abloom becomes Russia herself waiting for her people to return to her. And what love of Russia is expressed in the tender setting! It has the spirit of love to one's native land that Browning breathes in

' Oh to be in England now that April's there!'

Everything is so perfectly lovely in the first scene of the play that the heart aches to look at it.

The lady, her brother and daughter arrive and are melted by the old home. They almost rave about the orchard, one tree of which has even a dear blossoming hand inside the window, as if in welcome. The lady kisses the furniture piece by piece, her brother addresses an absurd but tender speech to the sideboard.

Good to be home. Good to be in Russia again! Yes, but though she is as beautiful as ever it is a changing Russia to which they have returned. The cherry orchard is for them more of a vision than a reality. It has to be sold by auction, and will in all probability be made into building lots.

'In the old days there were only lords and peasants,' says a character in the drama, 'but now there have sprung up those who live in suburban villas. There is a way of getting out of your financial embarrassment: raise a fresh loan and let your estate for building sites. I will arrange it for you.'

'Never, never,' says the lady. 'You are talking nonsense. Cut up this famous old estate and garden! Why . . . why, my little son was drowned in this garden. . . .'

'All the same, you will be sold up, and if you don't do it yourselves somebody else will, and will reap all the profit.'

'Nonsense!'

They won't hear of it. But it turns out as the man says. He himself buys the estate at the auction and turns the old family out.

He is the new Russian. His father has been one of the

serfs. Tsar Alexander liberated the serfs and in one generation some of their descendants have gained possession of the estates of the masters.

There is a heart-breaking last act when the people are turned out, and there are tears in the eyes of almost everybody in the theatre. The lady and her brother stay till the very last moment, almost till the sound of the train that must take them away. It is heart-breaking, but through the tears breaks a gleam of the sun, the same sun that brought the cherry orchard into such blossom and such beauty. Anya the daughter loves Trofimof the student, *the eternal student*. They are going to the university to be *intelligentsia*. Trofimof can refuse a big loan from the slightly conscience-troubled mortgagee who is turning them out, and say:

'Shut up, shut up: if you offered me two hundred thousand I wouldn't take it. None of all that you hold so high and value so dearly has the slightest power over me, or can touch my soul at all. You millionaire and beggar! . . .

'Give me my old goloshes—dear, old, worn goloshes. . . .'

'Good-bye home!' says Anya. 'Good-bye old life!'

'Hail to the new life,' says her lover.

It is autumn, and there has been the first frost. The doors and windows of the house are barred and shuttered. The people have gone away. Winter and emptiness and death are at hand. But you know that spring comes again, and the beautiful vision in another form, somewhere, somehow.

A beautiful national play.

III. 'Anathema'

Another very successful production of the Art Theatre was that of Leonide Andreyeff's play 'Anathema,' though its life was cut short through the intervention of the Censor. The Metropolitan of Moscow did not like it, probably did not understand it. You may not have God on the stage; but there seems little objection to staging the devil. It is done commonly enough. It was almost as if you might praise the devil with impunity, but you must not show him frustrate.

'Anathema' is a mystery play, bearing some superficial resemblance to 'Faust.' It is partly the story of the Book of Job, partly of the Garden of Eden. Anathema, the principal character, is an immortal spirit, ever on the earth and eternally ineffectual. He is Human Reason, the Serpent in the Garden, the Devil who led Christ into the high mountain. This spirit looks out from the uttermost stars of Man's consciousness into the dark abyss, and flings a question to the Inscrutable One. He demands one letter in the secret meaning of Life, and says he will construct the whole from it.

> 'All the world wishes goodness—and doesn't know where to find it; all the world goes out to find life and meets only death. Give me the secret of goodness, name me the secret of Eternal Life. I wait.'

The Inscrutable One answers:

> 'There is no name for that of which thou askest. There is no number that can count it, there is no measure that can measure it, no weights with which it can be weighed, oh Anathema. And if anyone has said the word "love"—

he has lied. And if anyone has said the word " reason " he has lied. And he who has pronounced the word " God " —has lied the last and dreadful lie. For number there is not—and measure not—no nor name, Anathema.'

'ANATHEMA: Whither, then, should I go?

'ANSWER: In the way that thou goest.

'ANATHEMA: What should I do?

'ANSWER: That which thou doest.

'ANATHEMA: In silence thou speakest. Shall I learn the language of thy silence?'

The Inscrutable One answers:

'No. Never. My face is uncovered, but thou seest it not. My speech loud—but thou hearest it not. My will is clear, but thou knowest it not, oh Anathema. And thou wilt never see, and thou wilt never hear—and never know, Anathema, unfortunate spirit, deathless among numbers, eternal in measures and weights, but not yet born into life.'

'ANATHEMA: Never?

'—: Never.'

The spirit is thus silenced for the time being, but he revolves in his mind a plot whereby he will either force the hand of the Almighty or he will be furnished with an instrument of supreme mockery. As it turns out the experiment is a failure, the Inscrutable is unmoved, God is not mocked, and the spirit is shamed.

Anathema descends to the world we live in and enters into the life of a certain very good and just man, David Layzer, and brings him an immense fortune. David had hitherto kept a wretched wayside shop where he sold goods amounting in value to about sixpence a day. Anathema visits him in the first act dressed in a frock

coat and silk hat: he is a lawyer bringing news of the great inheritance. The lawyer goes by the name of Mr. Nullus. David is angry and vexed; he had only looked to die and go to God, and the money is a disturbance. Obviously death is much further ahead now that he has so much wealth. The lawyer, however, points out what godly work may be done with such vast riches, and so slowly reconciles the old man to his new position. The shop is given up, and, although he has not received the money—the papers are not all in order—he opens up a large credit. He buys a fine house and allows the architects to build it and the furnishers to furnish it just as they will. In this mansion he takes the first step towards Anathema's goal. He makes Mr. Nullus his secretary and bosom friend, and accepts his advice on every point, which, being interpreted, means that he listens to his reason. Nullus suggests that the money be used to help the distressed and succour the needy. Every farthing of it shall be given to the poor. Nullus commences one evening, and runs out into the street to bring the wretched in. The wretched are at first suspicious, and Nullus has a small harvest, but gradually he succeeds. In some weeks he has very carefully distributed several thousands of pounds, and the beneficiaries naturally spread the news. David thinks that if each person takes from him just what is necessary, neither more nor less, he will have enough to go round and to make mankind happy. And to his money he adds smiles and kind words and loving looks, for he is a good man. The news goes abroad, and the poor and unhappy come to

him from all quarters, even from distant lands. And rumour paints with lies the facts of his generosity. He is reputed to have worked miracles, to have healed the sick, to have raised from the dead, and many come to him asking for miracles and signs. He pleads in vain that he is an ordinary man. Some will have it that he has come to establish a kingdom of heaven upon earth, and that he will be sovereign over all the afflicted and distressed. It appears now that the life of David Layzer is the story of what would have happened had Christ yielded to the third temptation—that temptation wherein Christ was offered glory and sovereignty if he would kneel to Satan, to Human Reason. David is hailed as king, but being unable to give the miserable that which is more than bread, they fall upon him and stone him as one who has deceived them. Besieged with worshippers, with his own wife and children, with coffins holding corpses, and beds holding lepers, David in vain urges that he is an ordinary man, in vain employs all the advice which Mr. Nullus (Anathema) can give him, and they pick up stones and stone him.

David Layzer dies. Anathema goes back to the uttermost stars of Man's consciousness, there once more to confront the Inscrutable. He knows he has failed to force the hand of the Almighty, but he thinks he has cause to revile and mock. The scene of the epilogue is therefore the same as that of the prologue, and, as the author writes most dramatically, 'Nothing has happened. Nothing has changed.' The gates of the Eternal, Unknowable Heaven are as before—entirely unaffected by the stormy scenes where Anathema has been playing

his part. The spirit hails the Inscrutable One as a liar, a deceiver, and a murderer. He tells the tale of David's life with laughter and mockery. The Inscrutable answers, 'Yes, David did that which thou sayest and the people that with which thou reproachest them. And the numbers do not lie, and the weights are correct, and each measure is that which it is. But not with that measure shall it be measured, nor with that number shall it be counted, nor with those weights shall it be weighed. There are other lights than that of the sun, and destroyed to these numbers, dead to these weights and measures, David has attained Eternal Light and Immortality.'

Then the spirit raves in despair, and wails and bemoans and curses. Six times he asks—Where is the truth?—and is unanswered; but to the question, 'Knoweth Anathema the truth?' he receives the answer 'No,' and what is said in the prologue is repeated, 'He shall never know.'

Whereupon he descends in shame, but reviling, to the world in which we live. He will now make the people build a monument to the man they killed, and the Comedy or Tragedy of Life will commence all over again.

XVIII

The Phenomenon of Friedrich Nietzsche

There was a man killed by his loneliness—so intolerable was this limited world to him, so irreconcilable was he.

He ever looked out disconsolate over the unnavigable sea of space. As Columbus drove a road over the Atlantic, so he wished to drive a road into the Infinite. He wished it from the bottom of his heart. And so urgent was the clamour of his yearnings in the ears of heaven, that the gods confounded his reason, and deprived him of the power of yearning.

Each morning this man saw the sun rise hopefully in the East; each evening saw it sink pitilessly in the West. He regarded his hopes; they also had risen hopefully in the East and sunk pitilessly in the West. He wished to follow his hopes into the West, even as Columbus had done, and thereby find the unknown India.

'Some day,' he cried, 'of our own people shall be born a God, an over-man; and he shall deliver us from this prison island, the world. For from that God shall spring a family of Gods. And Gods in turn will give birth to Super-Gods, a race who will scale the heavens and lead mankind out of bondage, as Moses did the Israelites of old time.

'No Gods will come down from heaven to save us, therefore we must rise up ourselves and take heaven by storm. We shall then have boats to navigate space and, singing songs of triumph, we shall leave the world behind. We shall travel from star to star, and explore heaven to the uttermost, ravaging it like the Goths.

We shall throw down the great God Himself if He be not stronger than we, and cause the angels to live on lower worlds out of our ken, on our old abandoned world. We shall be gods, and the old gods shall become men.'

So prophesied this man who stood on this prison island, the world, and sighed his soul towards the future. This was the daydream of the man who stood on a watch tower upon the Engadine, ' six thousand feet above the sea, and God knows how many feet above his fellow-creatures.'

He taught to man the gospel of *becoming*. Once man was ape, he became man, he shall become . . . he shall become a *god*, he shall become super-man, he shall tear down the stars from the heavens.

Mankind sent him no answer, but the blank heavens heard. The challenges and songs of this brave man rang across the soft sky, disturbing even the peace of the gods, and they confounded him.

They put him in a prison-house of circles. They revealed the Universe to him in hopeless circles, and crushed his reason.

In this wise.

They showed sun and moon and stars as circles; their paths as circles; the sky a circle; the world a circle; Nature emptying itself, swallowing itself, a circle; the seasons and the day, man's life and his thought, all circles were returning upon themselves.

Then the man thought, looking into the hopeless West: ' Through that fiery gate is the path only into the East; there is no eternal West. It is the same sun that rises in

the East each day, and I had thought it was a new sun, swimming out of my ken for ever in the West. It is the same mankind, neither better nor worse, that rises up each generation, as it is the same flowers that bloom each summer. The glory of Man, that set in the Egyptians, rose in the great Greeks, and when it set in them it rose once more in the Romans, and setting in the Romans it rose in the French, and setting in the French it rises in the Germans. It shall yet rise in the Russians, and so on *da capo*. There is no super-man, no god on earth, no super-god. Everything eternally recurs.'

Sitting on his high mountain, staring at the sky, where the gods were revealing all things in circles, his eyes became fixed in madness, like the eyes of a medium under the influence of a mesmerist. And, with the cry of a voice from a tomb, he cried out, ' In a number of days that is incalculable, immense, yet limited, a man like to me in everything, myself, in fact, seated on this rock, will again find in this very place this very idea. And this idea will be rediscovered by this man, not once only, but an infinite number of times.'

Then he rose from his mountain and walked about its slopes, sobbing and wailing, and singing great songs.

In his soul was a great battle of joy and sorrow. God and man strove within him. And the gods in heaven rejoiced because of the silence of this challenger. The Sphinx itself, that had trembled at his questions, and prepared to efface itself, settled down to two thousand years of sleep.

But this indomitable man was not yet overcome. He returned unto himself to gain power to return to the

combat. He shut his eyes to the bewitching arcs of heaven. He re-formed a knowledge which is independent of all thought. He found his way out of the prison of circles, he threaded his way out of all the labyrinths.

He shut his eyes resolutely to the circles, and he said, '*I will will illusion.*'

He went into quiet, and fashioned for himself and for mankind a vessel which should sail into that West where so many suns had sunk and perished. He wrote calmly the gospel of the over-man. He corrected all charts, transvalued all values, tried to set his compass.

All thoughts hitherto had had horizons, because, whether we wanted to or not, we thought in circles, we measured circles without thoughts. All our thoughts were curves like the paths of our vessels on the ocean, because we travelled along circumferences. This man proposed to think *in a straight line.*

'We shall suffer shipwreck on the Infinite,' he wrote. 'Or else, my brothers, or else?'

He suffered shipwreck on the Infinite.

Again the gods confounded him. In trying to steer into that course that has no horizon he broke his human brain. The straight line and the circles too terribly disagreed.

As upon the mountain when the terrible circles first blasted him, he sobbed and wailed, and sang great songs, and chanted Dionysian music. He was robbed even of the power of escaping the new labyrinth. The challenger was silenced.

For ten years he lived the pure life of a little child and was happy. Then he died.

* * * * *

Happy are those who can live the common life of the world and find it not too narrow. Happy those who have no nerves exposed to get chilled by spiritual airs. The natural life of man lies in a contented acceptance or ignorance of his limitations.

But then this challenging soul, this conception of a way out of all labyrinths, this idea of the straight line—it was born in the heart of a man, one like ourselves! His life was a question. The question wrecked his life, but the question remains there unanswered, unanswerable, an eternal beacon-light.

XIX

Dostoievsky's Life

Governments in Russia have a parlous way of sentencing Russians to death. The Russians are a great people, but all their Governments are brutal. Yet faith in Russia somehow survives official barbarity. So it was under the Tsars; so it is under the Soviets.

Dostoievsky, when in 1849 he was reprieved from the sentence of death, was content to have life on any terms, even in Siberia. After the shock of facing death, tied to a post and awaiting physical extinction, he could say: ' There remains in me my heart, and the same flesh and blood which can also love, and suffer, and desire, and remember; and, this, after all, is life. *On voit le soleil!*'

His body was weak, but he felt the spiritual life welling up within him; his mind was young, his being was emotional. He only asked to be allowed to write, and would rather spend fifteen years in prison with a pen in his hand than four without a pen. For he had the consciousness of a soul's need of self-expression. He swore he would not lose hope, and would preserve his spirit and heart in purity. He would be reborn to a better thing.

So it was, he ' did time '; slow Russian time, in the barbarous penal country; far from friends, loved ones; far from art and ideas, but not, we surmise, far from God—the pitiful, sorrow-loving God of the Russians. He went into the darkness and he found the ' religion of suffering '; he identified Russia in prison and in the

life of disciplinary battalions. I believe he would never have found Russia in St. Petersburg. But he did find her in Siberia.

One never reads a word of bitterness or of hate against the power that sent him there. The revenge feeling which poisoned the minds of so many political exiles never developed in him. In that respect he was a man of very Christlike character. He had, it is true, a new intellectual apprehension of Christianity; but he did not, as is common, check his behaviour by his intellectual conceptions of what he ought to do and be. He had the Christian *moral* in his very heart. In Siberia he began to know himself; he knew he was a true Russian, he knew in a very tender way that he was a Christian. And he identified being a Russian and being a Christian in his creative mind. Thus—'Holy Russia.'

Dostoievsky came back to civilisation and the West with a message: 'Our Russian idea will renew the world . . . the highest Christian idea, which is not even understood by Europe with her moribund Catholicism and her stupidly self-contradictory Lutheranism. . . . Our Russian aims are higher than those of the European world. We have a more direct and noble belief in goodness, goodness as Christianity, and not as a bourgeois solution of the problem of comfort. A great renewal is about to descend upon the whole world, through Russian thought, which is solidly welded with Orthodoxy, and this will be achieved in less than a hundred years—this is my passionate belief.'

One ought to remember that this was written in 1868.

Dostoievsky's prophetic vision looks to be now further from realisation than it did then. But by 1968 who can say where Russia will stand or how the Russia of this day will look then? Dostoievsky certainly never meant that he foresaw Socialism or Sovietism as the saving form of society for Europe. Above all things, he feared the sort of people who have now control of Russia: foreigners, atheists, and denationalised Radicals. He loathed the ' traitors abroad.'

Dostoievsky's first volume of letters was very interesting; the second one is more so. It has the literary flavour of his ' Diary of a Writer,' and has the freshness and openness of words never intended for publication.

Poor Dostoievsky! He could never have anticipated that his voluminous correspondence would be raked up and sold and printed and discussed, and that his intimate private affairs, such as the cost of the midwife at his wife's confinement, should be published, together with full details of his adventures at the pawnshop. ' Yesterday I pawned my last coat. I have 30 francs only, and 40 to pay to the nurse. . . . In six days at the latest my 30 francs will come to an end, and then—not a brass farthing, nothing to pawn, my whole credit exhausted.'

He is staying out of Russia to avoid a debtor's prison, owes there some twenty thousand roubles, and though not unsuccessful as a writer, he is a genius, and therefore temperamental, and cannot grind out words and stories like a machine. The marvel is that, having his restless temperament, and being subject to epilepsy, he wrote the great amount he did. It seems that with the pen in his hand he naturally and automatically forgot the idea

of labour, and wrote as one talks; flowed on as only a Russian can in converse; opened his heart to his correspondent, to his readers. These are long letters, and his books are long books. Such a contrast to Turgeniev, whose writing is all controlled and whose letters in general were so brief and uninteresting.

Dostoievsky is a true and characteristic Russian. He must be so, even to-day, when Russia has changed her face. He gave expression to the yearning of the Russian soul. He never denied Russia: he accepted her as she was, he never gibed at her. Abroad, in Western Europe, he saw much that was different and much that was better. He saw the bourgeois material comfort of Switzerland and Italy, but he never thought of it as worth fighting for, worth getting excited about. He would never fight except for the things of the spirit, never fight for more drains and more efficient post-offices and better housing; but always for the lost soul, for the injured and insulted, for the love of man for man, for the stars, for the Cross.

The political aspect of Dostoievsky's work has caused considerable pother in the minds of the Bolshevists. The Russian Radicals were much annoyed when, in 1914, the Art Theatre of Moscow presented a dramatic version of 'The Possessed,' and Gorky, who had then returned to Russia, made an attack on Dostoievsky, whose work he declared was a Mongolianisation of Russia. Gorky at that time was all in favour of the bourgeois comforts of the West—'where you feel man is not losing himself.'

Discussion of Dostoievsky was at its height when the

war intervened. The war brought revolt and brought the Bolshevists. It brought into power the people whose type Dostoievsky had in part portrayed. And they, again, raised the question of the denial of Dostoievsky and the censorship of his works.

It was reported abroad that 'The Possessed' had been mutilated or withdrawn from libraries. Evidently such mutilation or withdrawal, where it did occur, was a local matter.

The liberation of these last letters and documents from the Russian Archive is an indication that at present the Censor is not stopping Dostoievsky. For in this correspondence with the poet Maikov one sees Dostoievsky in his most ardent mood. That he was writing to a poet perhaps explains the poetical rapture of some of his literary visions. He outlines for Maikov to write long ballads of the life of the European peoples with marvellous colouring: one to tell of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and the rise of Russian Christianity; another the Reformation, the discovery of the New World, the quest of gold, the stories of England and Spain; another to tell the story of Peter the Great.

One fact emerges more clearly from the letters than from his novels, and that is Dostoievsky's flaming belief in Holy Russia, 'the light coming out of the East.' That faith, in this dark and obscure era, may serve to keep the lamp of Russia burning.

I hear it commonly asked, a little triumphantly, 'Where's your Holy Russia now? One answer might suffice—it is with Dostoievsky. And Dostoievsky lives.

XX

Vladimir Solovyof

Solovyof did a very valuable service to the Church of Russia by breaking up its superficial formalism, orientating its traditions and genius with regard to Christian culture, thereby making it the Church of the cultured as well as of the peasant-pilgrim and the monks and priests. He gave to contemporary Russian philosophy its present religious and national basis which distinguishes it from Western philosophy generally, and he made it possible for Russian thinkers to work for the elucidation of their own religious ideas rather than to dedicate themselves to Westernism pure and simple. Without Solovyof it is no exaggeration to say that Orthodoxy might have remained merely a peasants' church with beautiful traditions which were being forgotten, and a profound significance being forgotten also. The Russian Church still remains comparatively unknown, unstudied, and unsystematised. It is associated with the illiterate peasant who hands the ideas and the customs on, embellished by his own religious experience and the marks of his soul's progress. It stands, therefore, a chance of being condemned, cleaned out, and reformed on puritan lines. There were many who even before the Revolution desired the spoliation of the Church. The material wealth, which amounted to some millions in gold and jewels, tempted, as did also the revenues of the Church, poor though the latter were —it did not possess great tracts of land as was the case in England at the time of the Reformation. But it is just

to say that reformers are less interested in taking wealth than in forcing their ideas upon people living, as they think, in horrid darkness. They hate the old Russian ideas and traditions and are taken up almost entirely with admiration of France, Germany, England or America. The Revolution is a tremendous gain for the Baptists, Adventists, Stundists, and the Secularists. It may attempt to crush and beat out Orthodoxy. But the probability is that it will fail, thanks to the work of Vladimir Solovyof. Not that the peasant knows Solovyof. The peasant is not master of himself. The will of others is imposed on him from above, and now not from the Emperor who loved him and relied on him, but from a Western set who distrust him as a traditional enemy. But the influence of Solovyof and what he did will be undoubtedly felt in the new democracy, and the true values of the Church are less likely to be obscured because of what he has said and thought.

As a Russian writer says: ' He passed like an ice-breaker through our religious formalism, because in him burned an enthusiasm for true religious themes, for the actual substance of religion, and not merely for opinions about religion.'

The Russians accepted Christianity at the hands of the Greeks in the tenth century, and although that was before the division of the Church into East and West, Russia never was much influenced by the West. She remained in the spirit of Byzantium. The ideas of meditation, suffering, and of the beauty and majesty of death seem to have suited the Slav temperament.

Passivity, not activity, is the distinguishing mark of the Church, and since the tenth century it has steadily conserved whatever has come to it from the Russian soul. It has not cast out much, has eliminated little. The Slav temperament, as is well known, loves complexity; it does not love simplicity. That is another way of saying it is not addicted to reducing and simplifying, and is addicted to multiplying and rendering more complex. The sense for complexity—and by that I mean real organic complexity—is a valuable Russian possession, possibly finding more satisfaction in expressing our nature and destiny than the more ordinary and obvious sense which most of us possess—namely, that for simplicity. And the Russian Church is a naturally complex institution preserving a far-reaching and marvellous inheritance of this kind for a race that will continue to seek spiritual ends.

It is, however, not for us so much as for Russian scholars to survey the development of national and religious expression in Russia between the tenth and nineteenth centuries. It is in the nineteenth century that Europe becomes spiritually aware of Russia, in the twentieth that she becomes definitely interested. And for Europe two voices mean Russia—those of Dostoievsky and Tolstoy. Let us add a third. For inevitably there arises Solovyof, the greatest of the three. Dostoievsky and Tolstoy were artists, but their significance does not remain in the domain of art. It is their voice in religion that causes them to be so important. These two seem to contradict one another, but they are harmonised and united in

the creative thought of the great master and leader Solovyof.

Dostoievsky comes first with his prophetic ardour, amounting at times to delirium. He is, as it were, a lay priest, a priest after the order of Melchizedek; he comes from the people and preaches the gospel of the living Christ, the resurrected Christ, who is walking the Russian roads, the Christ whom the Russian people knows at sight and shelters. He prophetically announces Russia as the God-bearing nation, the special vessel prepared for the growth and birth of the new Christ-child.

At the same time Dostoievsky remains distinctly loyal to the Orthodox Church; he is even at times what might be called "churchy," *tserkovny*, as the Russians say. He denies nought in the great accumulated spiritual inheritance of the Church. And the Byzantine inheritance of the worship of God through the spectacle of Death he transfers to the written page as a merely human conception and shows us his portrait of Christ as Mishkin the idiot.

Tolstoy, on the other hand, opposes all the circumstance of outward signs, the Church visible, culture, and the world, in the name of the kingdom of heaven which is within. He will have nothing of the Orthodox Church as such, preferring

'Before all temples the upright heart and pure'—

does not care for society as a collective whole, but cares for the individual human soul in which is all things.

How divergent these prophets of Russia in their tendency! It would seem to foreigners like ourselves as if in Russia there must be Tolstoyans and Dostoievskians, two camps definitely opposed to one another. And yet it is not so. Perhaps because one cannot very well stand without the other—Tolstoy appearing as an anarchist if taken by himself, Dostoievsky as a reactionary. But there comes Solovyof, and unites them on one side in the culture of Russia, taking the genius for the inner life from Tolstoy and the genius for the outer from Dostoievsky, and combining them in the idea of humanity itself as one great Church, breaking through the formalism of the church or churches as they are externally organised, and finding the integral section or part of the mystical substance of the universal Church.

Solovyof gave shape to the struggle of Russia to become articulate, shape to its tendency, something to work for, for all mankind who understood to work for—the consciousness of the unity of mankind, not so much the unity of the bodies of men, though that also, but of the ardent glorifying spirit of humanity.

As the work of Solovyof is not known here and extremely little of his writing is available except in the original Russian, it will be better for the sake of brevity and clarity to tabulate in an elementary form the ideas to which specially he consecrated his life and his energies. They were:

1. The Universal Church, the idea of the unity of Christendom, and beyond that ultimately the conscious unity of mankind; not a world-republic, however, but a world Church.

2. The evolution of the God-man, not the superman with his greater earth-sense and fierceness, but the God-man with his greater heaven-sense, mystical sense.

3. The Eternal Feminine, a characterisation of all humanity at one in the mystical body of the Church; Woman as the final expression of the material world in its inward passivity.

4. Love as the highest revelation, the gleam of another world upon our ordinary existence; Love therefore as the proof of immortality, the guerdon and sense of it.

5. Sancta Sophia, the Heavenly Wisdom; the grand final unity of praise, the wall of the city of God.

Thus stated briefly it may perhaps be more easy to obtain the first rudimentary conceptions of what this great new prophet and teacher's vision was. It will then be more easy to fill in the details and to judge for ourselves whither he leads and in what relation to his great and new conception of the future our own conceptions lie. It is the time of re-thinking, of destroying and building afresh. All the old is being cast into the crucible to-day. Certain great figures already begin to stand out in the eyes of humanity, and one of these is Vladimir Solovyof.

Undoubtedly in connection with the realisation of the World-Church must appear the higher type of man, the God-man—not the super-man who is merely the king of men on the animal plane, but Man the Christ-child.

In this conception the Russian Church in its spirit and expression has certainly helped Solovyof. It has been easier for him to arrive at the conception of the God-man than it would have been for a Protestant or

Catholic. We should have been bound to consider the pride of the body at its best, and have deduced future humanity from that. But the Russian is otherwise circumstanced by virtue of his Church. Within the domain of his Christianity there is a marked antipathy toward the animal side of man's nature. Strongly as is that side developed in the ordinary Russian, it is nevertheless true that nowhere as in Russia have such heroic attempts been made to overcome the natural and normal man in favour of the Divine, the superhuman, the unearthly and mystical. Witness the popular ascetic life, the life of the hermits and champions (*podvizhniki*) of the *Skoptsi* and *Khlisti*, and other anti-natural sects which practise even mutilation in order to *overcome*. It is supremely the land where it is felt to be true that ' blessed is he who overcometh.' The Orthodox Church especially, with its back turned against ordinary life and its eyes looking beyond the grave, stands in a strangely advanced position, and is the greatest expression of collective faith that humanity has known. Solovyof sees it as a sort of outpost on the great road where all nations are pilgrims, where all nations are on the way to the place where they will be at one.

A certain amount of patience on the part of the student and also of humility is required. It is so easy to be led astray from the true scent, and to waste life and energy attacking and condemning superficial things, not ever reaching the profound and real things. So it is with the attitude of most Western minds towards Russian religious expression.

Solovyof, born and bred in Russian Orthodoxy, never falls into the position of Tolstoy, who rejected the whole fabric because of certain external faults. But he rests on the positive side, on the empyreal substance and heavenly gold of the Church, as, on the other hand, he rests on all that is sound in Darwinism and the theory of Evolution. He is at once a mystic and a progressive, lives upon the planes of heaven and of earth at one and the same time. It is in this way that he arrives at the type of the God-man. He states in his great work, ' The Justification of the Good ':

> ' The imperative " Be ye perfect " does not refer to separate acts of will, but puts before us all a life-long task. . . .' [And to be perfect is to have become, not superman, but divine man.] ' . . . The historical process is a long and difficult transition from the bestial to the divine man. . . .'

' The process of manifesting God in matter has five stages called kingdoms: the mineral, the vegetable, the animal, the human, and then God's kingdom—that is, the ascending process of universal perfection.'

Our old materialism of all things classified as belonging to the mineral kingdom, the vegetable kingdom, and the animal kingdom gives way to something more subtle in the addition of the human kingdom and the kingdom of heaven.

The ascending process is marked in this way:

' Stones and metals are distinguished by their extreme self-sufficiency and conservatism. Had it rested with them Nature would never have awakened from her dreamless slumber. But, on the other hand, without

the stones and the metals there would have been no firm basis or ground for further growth.

'Then plants in unconscious unbroken dreams draw *towards* warmth, light, and moisture. [The second stage.]

'Animals by means of *sensations* and free *movements* seek the fulness of sensual being: repletion, sexual satisfaction, the joy of existence. [Third stage.]

'Natural humanity in addition to these things rationally strives to *improve* its life by means of sciences, arts, and social institutions, actually improves it in various ways, and finally rises to the idea of absolute perfection. Spiritual humanity, or humanity born of God (*Bogochelovetchestvo*), not only understands this absolute perfection with the intellect, but accepts it in its heart and its conduct as *the true beginning of that which must be fulfilled in all things*. It seeks to realise it to the end and to embody it in the life of the universe.'

As St. John says in Browning's poem of 'The Death in the Desert,' the first soul

> 'has the use of earth, and ends the man
> Downward: but tending upward for advice
> Grows into and again is grown into
> By the next soul, which seated in the brain
> Useth the first with its collective use,
> And feeleth, thinketh, willeth,—is what knows:
> Which, duly tending upward in its turn,
> Grows into, and again is grown into
> By the last soul, that uses both the first,
> Subsisting whether they assist or no,
> And, constituting man's self, is what Is—
> And leans upon the former, makes it play,

> As that played off the first: and, tending up,
> Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man
> Upward.'

Not that Browning meant the same thing by divine humanity and the God-man that Solovyof does. His sense was for the individual pilgrim and seeker, not for collective humanity, religious pan-humanism as some of Solovyof's followers style it.

Solovyof finds in Christ the great premonitory type in human evolution. ' He is not,' he says, ' the last word in the actual human kingdom, but He is the first word of the kingdom of God.'

In Solovyof's philosophy no attempt is made to find a higher form than this which is capable of an infinite development. In man a universal consciousness progresses. In actuality he seems a part of Nature, but in his spiritual conceptions he oversteps the bounds of the merely human, and discloses himself as a centre of universal consciousness, in religion, science, morality, and art. Though man in his form is mortal and partial, having no absolute grasp of anything, he is yet capable of reflecting ultimate truth in his being.

There is a definitely graduated progress of vision from the minerals which sleep, through vegetables which dream, and animals which have joy in life, and human man who thinks and reasons to God-man who divines. What is it the God-man divines? What is the substance of the higher vision? Solovyof's answer set out simply is this: He sees the unity of this divine in us all; he sees the unity of this divine in us with the divine without; he sees ahead of us in time or in eternity the increasing

sense of that unity, its realisation in individuals and in the Church on earth, the ceasing of the multiplication of the species, the reconciliation of the duality of male and female in one type. And he sees this unity as the Church, Sophia, the Heavenly Jerusalem, where every man and woman who has ever lived or will live is inbuilt like a brick in the wall of the cathedral.

The condition of the divine humanity of this vision differs considerably from those of humanity as we generally see it in ideal. Solovyof lays great stress on the denial of the animal side of our nature. If every philosophy expounded by men may be said to be in the nature of an *apologia pro vita sua* and there is no stigma attaching to that definition, Solovyof may well be said to lay considerable personal stress on his particular interpretation of the overcoming of the animal in us. He was himself in his life a virginal type. He is said to have had a deathless love for a woman who, however, returned not the affection and married someone else. What modification there would have been in Solovyof's statement of his philosophy if he had married, it would be perhaps unfair to surmise. The great pattern of his vision would remain, and quite possibly the psychology which he wrote of love would be in material effect the same. But doubtless he would have written more fully and more gently, and possibly more convincingly, concerning the gleam of attraction between men and women.

Thus he insists: ' The carnal means of the reproduction of the species is for man evil, it is contrary to the dignity of man, destructive of human love and

life. Our moral relation to this fact must be wholly negative. . . . It is man's final acceptance of the kingdom of death which is maintained and perpetuated by carnal reproduction, and it deserves absolute condemnation.'

The obvious objection to this is the rather threadbare question which even the Bishop of London has been discussing lately: ' What then is going to happen to the human race?' Solovyof's answer is in effect: ' The human race will look after itself.' He puts it in this way: ' The idea that the preaching of sexual abstinence is likely to stop the propagation of the human race is absurd. . . . But should the moment come, then the historical process would be at an end and we should be beginning " the life to come." '

This comes somewhat startlingly in the midst of a halcyon philosophy which does not seem to trouble us in the practical domain of life. In this impatient era when literary thought becomes almost a game of forfeits, and when a man gives us an opportunity to condemn him he is forced to become silent, we might dismiss Solovyof here at once as anti-natural and ridiculous. But it is always worth while foregoing to condemn and pursuing investigation further.

Although Solovyof denies the flesh in this formidable way, he does not deny love as between man and woman, but on the contrary he finds in that love almost the most marvellous experience in our existence. But he claims and, in his remarkable essay on the ' Meaning of Love,' offers proof that the love of a man for a woman and of a woman for a man does not merely

serve a racial end. This love, he observes, is most associated with the animals who reproduce least. The fish, spawning millions, do not exhibit any particular mutual attraction. But among the birds already something of the nature of love has appeared. In the mammals there is still further progress. But with man, who multiplies least, love is most intense and significant. A strong attraction between the sexes does not therefore imply a great resultant reproduction.

Nor will Solovyof allow the popular theory that the intensity or speciality of the love of a certain man and a certain woman makes for the birth of genius. Great men are not necessarily born from parents who have loved greatly. 'We find no relation between the strength of the passion of love and the significance of progeny coming after. On first consideration we meet a fact completely inexplicable in the light of this theory —that the strongest love is quite frequently unshared, and that not only does no great posterity, but no posterity at all, result. If, as a result of such love, men become monks or commit suicide, then for what purpose did the world-will interested in posterity take this trouble? And if the ardent Werther does not kill himself, still his unhappy passion must remain an inexplicable enigma for the theory of graduated posterity. It is extraordinary that the individualised and exalted love of Werther for Charlotte showed (from the point of view of the theory) that it was just from Charlotte that he ought to obtain a posterity especially important and necessary for humanity, for the sake of which the world-will awakened in him this uncommon passion.

But how was it that this all-knowing and almighty will did not think or was unable to act in the desired sense upon Charlotte also, seeing that without her participation the passion of Werther remained wholly aimless and superfluous? For the teleological acting substance, love's labour lost is a complete absurdity.

'Specially strong love is more often than not unrequited, and quite frequently unrequited love leads to suicide in one form or another; and each of the innumerable suicides caused by unrequited love manifestly refutes this theory, according to which a strong love is only for this purpose awakened, that the required posterity may be brought forth, whose importance is marked by the strength of the love; when, as a matter of fact, in all these suicides the actual force of love excludes the possibility, not of an important resultant posterity, but of any posterity whatever.

'Occasions of unrequited love are too common for it to be possible to see in them only an exception to the rule. But even if we granted it so, it would help little, for even in those cases where great love is developed on both sides it does not lead to the result demanded by the theory. According to the theory Romeo and Juliet should give to the world some very great man, at least a Shakespeare, but in actual fact it is, as we know, the other way round: not they created Shakespeare, as should have followed from the theory, but he created them, and that without any passion, by a mode of non-sexual creativeness. Romeo and Juliet, like the majority of passionate lovers, died, not giving birth to anyone, and the Shakespeare giving birth to them and to other

great people was not born of a madly infatuated pair, but from an ordinary human marriage. (And Shakespeare himself experienced a strong passion, as we know from the Sonnets among other things, but no remarkable posterity followed.) The birth of Christopher Columbus was perhaps more important for the world-will than the birth of Shakespeare, but we know nothing of any especial love of his parents for one another, though we know of his own strong passion for Donna Beatrice Enrico, and though she bore him their illegitimate son Diego, yet that son did nothing great, and wrote only the biography of his father, which anyone might have done.'

Solovyof carries his enquiry further, namely into the domain of religious myth, and finds remarkable confirmation of his contention in the Old Testament.

' The central fact of Biblical history, the birth of the Messiah, more than other presupposes a providential plan in the choice and union of those who should lead to His birth, and indeed the chief interest of Biblical stories is concentrated upon the diversified and wonderful destinies which brought about the birth and union of the " fathers of God." But in all this complicated system of means, defining in order of historical phenomena the birth of the Messiah, there was no place for love in its real sense. Love, of course, is met with in the Bible, but only as an independent fact, and not as the instrument of the Christ-attaining process. The Holy Book does not say that Abraham and Sarah married in the course of ardent love; but in any case Providence waited till whatever love there were had

altogether cooled in order that the hundred-year-old parents should bring into the world a child of faith though not of love. Isaac did not marry Rebekah for love but rather in accordance with a previously determined plan of his father. Jacob loved Rachel, but that love seems to have been unnecessary for the production of the Messiah. He must come from a son of Jacob—from Judah, who was not born of Rachel, but of unloved Leah. For the issue in a certain generation of the ancestors of the Messiah the union of Jacob with just this woman Leah was indispensable, but to that end the Almighty did not awaken in Jacob a strong passionate love toward the future mother of the God-bearer, Judah; the higher power allowed him to love Rachel, and did not overrule the freedom of his affection, but in order to bring about the necessary marriage with Leah made use of means of quite another nature—the self-interested wile of a third person, Laban, devoted to his own family and his own economic ends. Judah himself, in order to give to life the next ancestor of the Messiah, was obliged, despite previous posterity, to unite himself in his old age with his own daughter-in-law, Tamar. And because such a union was altogether out of the usual order of things, it had to be attained by means of an extremely strange incident very attractive to superficial readers of the Bible. But in this incident there can be no question of any love whatsoever. It was not love which brought together the harlot Rahab of Jericho and the stranger Hebrew; at first she gave herself to him in the course of her profession, and afterwards the accidental connection

was strengthened by her faith in the power of a new God and by the wish for His protection for her and hers. It was not love that united David's great-grandfather Boaz to the young Moabite woman Ruth, and it was not from real deep love but only from casual sinful fancy that David begat Solomon.

'In sacred as in general history, sexual love does not appear as the instrument of historical ends; it is not in the service of human birth. And so, when subjective feeling tells us that love is an independent blessing, having its own absolute value for our personal life, objective reality confirms that feeling, and we find as a fact that strong individual love is never the serviceable instrument of racial ends. In general history as in sacred history, sexual love (in its true sense) plays no rôle whatever, and in no way helps the historical process; its positive significance must lie in individual life. What sort of sense, then, has it here?'

The answer which Solovyof gives is that love is the nullification of egoism, the desire for heavenly unity. In this unity man finds his true individuality and immortality. 'The division of the human being into male and female elements is a disintegration and the beginning of death. To be in separateness means to be on the road towards death. It is only a whole man who could be immortal, and if physical union cannot establish the wholeness of the human being then the false union should be exchanged for a true union.' The true union is that of the spiritual mystic and godly being in us with that same being in another.

It is curious that whilst Tolstoy and Solovyof may both

be accused of being ascetic and anti-natural in their attitude to the functions of sex, yet Tolstoy is infinitely suspicious of the female principle and Solovyof is infinitely trustful. He is not merely gallant, or even chivalrous, which is more sincere than to be gallant. He has a wonderful regard for all women, and each that he meets he treats as if she were someone celestial. If one can judge by suggestions in his poetry and by what is said of his life, Solovyof had that gentle and very beautiful but sincere regard for the presence of a woman, her judgment, her voice. He allows to her speech its full quality, as if it were indeed the language of another and most loved country, and it was at once necessary to give all the ear to catch each accent of it, and as if one specially delighted in the sound of it. She is always Mary; he is always Gabriel. He sees in her the shadow-form and premonition of the Eternal Feminine, the Church that is to be, the Bride. He holds that in the pathos of love a man sees a woman, not as she appears from external observation, but as she is in essence or idea. He sees the final human type, the consummation of our beauty and genius. 'The moral duty in marriage,' says Solovyof, 'is so to act as to realise in the actual woman the ideal vision. On the other hand, the highest form of love in woman has a corresponding character. The man whom she has chosen appears to her as her true saviour, destined to reveal to her and to realise for her the meaning of life. . . . The true human marriage is one which consciously aims at this perfect union.'

This very passionate belief of the philosopher Solovyof

has had considerable influence in the domain of Russian idealism and poetry. It has had a real vital influence, which has only begun to make itself felt. It has also resulted in the formation of a sort of poetic cult.

The West holds that a marriage is not a true one unless it has been consummated physically. The East holds that physical consummation marks the imperfection of the married state. ' Time goes on because marriage is imperfect,' says Solovyof. ' When marriage becomes perfect the temporal succession will cease.'

A characteristic flower of this idealism is the volume of Alexander Blok, entitled ' Of the Thrice-Beautiful Lady,' in which every ' Thee ' and ' Thou ' refers to the dream-vision of the Eternal Feminine. When we remember that the aspiration towards the Madonna is even stronger among the peasants than the aspiration toward God, who is taken for granted as standing behind and supporting all His saints, it is more easy to grasp the great national background of Solovyof's philosophic contentions. So Alexander Blok writes:

> ' At the doors of the twilight of prayers
> I will open my heart and await.'

And the person whom he awaits is the Eternal Bride. He looks at the great mystical portrait of the Madonna with its flowers and tapers and lamps. The service is being sung by a strange crowd of fellow-men. He shuts his eyes or kneels and prays, and suddenly sees just a gleam of her raiment or a glimmer of lilies.

When Solovyof wrote between jest and earnest that the most significant thing that ever happened to him in

life was when all that is, all that was, that will be for ever, was incarnate in one woman's face of heavenly beauty, we get the true indication of the importance of the idea of the Eternal Feminine in his philosophy.

Prince Yevgeny Trubetskoi, who has written a great work on Solovyof, holds the idea of the realisation of immortality through the perfect love of man and woman and the cessation of reproduction, to be a romantic dream which can be left on one side, as it does not affect the greater doctrine, namely that of *Bogochelovetchestvo* or divine humanity. But though undoubtedly his point of view is biassed by his own personal passion and poignant feeling, I do not think that we in England need overlook it. We need only to step more cautiously, and to remember that for the moment the Russian is finding difficulty in articulating a portion of his belief. Although the statement is at times only conditionally true and the saving clauses and needful reservations seem to have been omitted, the philosopher is nevertheless all the while hinting and suggesting the eternal things which can never be said to complete satisfaction.

What can one say about the Bride of Christ, all-humanity-as-one, Sancta Sophia, except by suggestion, by impression, by reproducing the miraculous word of poetry, the dream vision of the City? How can we give one burst or far-off echo of the great music of God wherein all sounds are harmonised and all harmonies blend into the higher harmonies of the ultimate *Gloria*?

Solovyof believed in a unity of all nations. Not a cos-

mopolitan unity or reduction to type as in the United States, but a union of each nation in its place. The true unity of languages is not an *Esperanto* or *Volapük* or everyone speaking French, ' not a single language, but an all-embracing language, an interpenetration of all languages. Similarly a true unity of nations does not mean a single nationality, but an all-embracing nationality, the interaction and solidarity of all nations for the sake of each having an independent and full life of its own. . . . All nations at their highest have seen the value of their nationhood to lie not in themselves but in something more universal. . . . The Body of Christ will be a perfect organism, and cannot consist of simple cells alone (*i.e.*, persons), but must contain larger and more complex organs (nations).' It is no exaggeration to say that Solovyof looks forward to a united world, though whether materially or mystically realised, it would be hard to say; in his work the material realisation becomes attenuated and passes into the mystical, and the temporal into the eternal. Does he not look forward to a moment when the last hour of time will strike and the eternal have already begun, the beginning of *the life to come*? He treads a path that for a long while is on this earth and then goes up to heaven.

In Russia they sing for the dead what is called an Eternal Memory. The first part was beautifully translated by the late W. H. Birkbeck, and is known here as the Russian 'Contakion for the Dead.' It was sung most fittingly at St. Paul's at the memorial service for Lord Kitchener, and Russian hearts in the audience thrilled

to feel that the same hymn could be sung by East and West.

> ' Give rest, O Christ, to Thy servant, with Thy saints
> Where sorrow and pain are no more,
> Neither sighing, but Life everlasting.
> Thou only art immortal, the Creator and Maker of man;
> And we are mortal, formed of the earth,
> And unto earth shall we return,
> For so Thou didst ordain when Thou createdst me
> Saying, Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.
> All we go down to the dust, and, weeping o'er the grave,
> We sing: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!'

And then follows a great choric burst of singing: ' Eternal Memory! Eternal Memory! Eternal Memory!'

This is a hymn which we could sing for all those who died in the war and the revolution. Europe lies low; she may lie lower yet, more desolate.

> ' Sceptre and Crown must tumble down
> And in the dust be equal made
> With the poor peasant's scythe and spade '

in order that something larger and more spacious may be built. What has happened lately in Russia has caused us to turn a new corner in history and to see a new view and on to a new country, seen perhaps beforehand by Solovyof from the lofty eminence of his vision. The opportunity for a more united humanity is at hand, and possibly everyone who dies for liberty dies also that the new may come.

The Eternal Memory does not mean ' May the dead be remembered by us for ever!' Solovyof interprets the hymn as meaning: ' May God remember them for

ever! May they dwell in the eternal mind of God!' May he who has died become part of the imperishable substance!

Give rest, O Christ, to Thy servant, with Thy saints. ' May he become conformable to God's eternal thought about him and to what he should be in the sphere of the absolute and the changeless!' That is the prayer and the vision of Vladimir Solovyof for the individual and for the nation; for the living, for those to be, and for all those who have ever died; for a united world and a Universal Church. May the poem of the Heavenly Sophia, the idea of ideas, be realised in humanity, and reflect itself in all the mirror surfaces of the World-Soul!

* * *

A long view, this of Vladimir Solovyof! And mankind without qualms continues to reproduce, nay, even with a certain amount of self-consolation, to say nothing of self-congratulation. The failure makes a new start in his child, or in someone else's child. And all men are failures; for to be mortal is a failure. And he who is not mortal, let him go upstairs. We are all mortals down here—on the ground floor, and loving and quarrelling round a big pot full of yesterdays, seething yesterdays which we call history. Oh, Vladimir Solovyof, we are far from the ' end of the historical process ' and the beginning of the ' Kingdom upon Earth,' ' God-Humanity,' Sophia,' The Bride.' And the End men looked for cometh not.

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THE CHALLENGE OF THE DEAD

By STEPHEN GRAHAM

We cannot do better than quote Mr. Stephen Graham's Preface especially written for the Essex Library Edition of this book:—

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" It is possible they may have preserved in words something which ought not to be forgotten."

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